

THE
GENERAL INEFFICACY
And
INSINCERITY
Of a LATE, Or
Death-bed Repentance.

WITH
Earnestest Dissuasives from committing our Eternal Condition, to that Infinite Hazard.

AND
A full Resolution of the Case, How far a *Death-Bed Repentance* is possible, to be sincere and effectual.

ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ, ἄρτι Ε, ΤΟ ΣΗΜΕΡΟΝ καλῶτα.

To DAY, whilst it is called, To DAY; lest any one be hardened through the Deceitfulness of Sin. Heb. 3. 7, 13.

LONDON,

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Sign of the *Black Bear*, in *St. Pauls Church-*
yard. 1670.

GENERAL INTELLIGENCE
THE

INSTANT

Death-bed Repentance

II IV V

[Faint, mirrored text from reverse side:]
Barnes & Noble
New York City
WITH

A full resolution of the cause for
the present state of affairs is possible in the future.

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1. The first step is to identify the problem or question that needs to be answered. This involves understanding the context and the specific requirements of the task.

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THE
PREFACE

To the

R E A D E R.



IT may seem unseasonable, and morose, to deny the value of any kind of Repentance, in such an Age as this; wherein there is a Generation arisen, Oh how lofty are their eyes? and their eye-lids lifted up with scorn? and disdain of all Religion? An Age so irreligious! that it seems necessary to gather up all the Fragments, though but of a seeming Piety, and make the most of them; rather than to call things to so strict a ballance: A thinner, and more dilute Repentance, then would formerly have admitted a man into a visible Church;

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may at such a time, as this, hope for Heaven.

To all this I must answer, *First*, The looseness of an Age does not slacken, or dissolve eternal Laws; Wisdom abates nothing of its price; of that timely, and early search after it; whether men think good to give it, or whether they will forbear. It hath no meaner esteem of it self, because Folly, that is simple, and knoweth nothing, sitteth upon the high places of the City, full of noise and clamor, and intices to its entertainments the Multitude, and Grandeur of the World.

All the severities of Scripture, that make the way to Heaven narrow, and the Gate strait, stand like Rock, from generation to generation, alike in all times. Nothing that is prodigally loosed on earth, in compliance
with

to the Reader.

with a licentious Age, will be therefore loosed in Heaven.

The goodly price of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, at which God is priz'd by men, even then; when Religion is at the lowest, is rejected with indignation; and the everlasting state purchased by it, may be sadly called an *Aceldema*, a *Field of blood*.

If this severity of Divine Truth offend any one, The resolution is that of our Saviour. Every plant, whether person or thing, that our Heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.

2. It is no improbable way of contesting against Atheism, and general Irreligion, by the strict Doctrines of Christianity; as well, as by Arguments of Reason: Nay Authoritative Applications of the Truth of God, often strike the Conscience within

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within the Reason, sooner and quicker than industrious attempts upon the Reason: as lightning melts the steel, and neglects the scabbard. Pressings of Faith, Repentance, Holiness, eternal Judgment make men (even unbelievers) fall down upon their faces, when the secrets of their Hearts are discovered, and confess; God is there.

For the Soul of man is more easily wrought upon by those domestick Rebukes, God gives it by his Word, than by more solemn treaties.

Especially, corrupted reason takes upon it self to be a lawful Authority, when an honourable War is commenced against it by the better reason on the other side; It contemns laws of Discourse, as precarious; and makes account, it gives Reason for Reason. But the rod of God shaken
over

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over it makes it tremble, and confesses it self a slave; Thus the slaves in the Story were more easily reduced by the servile chastisements they were acquainted with, than by the force of Armies. Atheism grows the prouder generally for being reasoned with; It does but dissemble, while it pretends its disease to be in the Head, which it knows indeed to be in the sensual Heart. And therefore is pleased to be struck in the Head; but cannot endure to be wounded in the Heart, which the Word of God especially aymes at.

Not, but that it is indeed a most generous and honorable Atchievement to shew Religion to be the highest Reason; and to detect those pretending sons of Reason, of the greatest Irrationality. But it is still to be acknowledged; the plain preaching
ing

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ing of the Gospel, which the Apostle calls the Foolishness and Weakness of God, is alone wiser and stronger than men; The reason of that, couched under an Heavenly Authority of Truth, carries those *ταύτα δυνάμει*, those mighty weapons, whereby every high Imagination and reasoning is to be subdued, that lifts up itself against God. *οὐκ ἐστὶν δύναμις τοῦ θεοῦ*

Upon this occasion, I cannot, but bewail those unhappy divisions, that have separated the Preachers of the Gospel one from another, and thereby opened a lane for that black troop to advance in, and made the trumpet of the Gospel to sound so uncertainly, that it hath rather scattered men, than prepared them to the Battail. *ὅπως οὖν ἡμεῖς ἵνα ὁ λόγος τοῦ κυρίου*

Our Saviour foreseeing the Consequences hereof, according to that
great

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great Maxime of his, *b* Every Kingdom divided against it self is brought to desolation, did so earnestly command Unity and Love of one another to his Disciples in general; and more particularly to the Ministers of his Word, as the most effectual Demonstration, *c* He was sent from God, and his Doctrine from Heaven. From whence it follows, where-ever this Union is broken; Christianity is lyable to the Imputations of being a great cheat and fraud. Upon which advantage loathsome Irreligion enters, and spreads it self in those empty spaces, begotten by our distances, and removes from one another: All divisions in Christianity are scandals to it, and weaken it. This we see verified in our Days, The differences in Religion, and the prophane scorn or stupid neglect of it, being alike visible.

b Mat. 18. 25. *c* Joh. 17. 21.

b

dna

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and notorious throughout the Nation.

Yet upon just accounts: the Irreligion consequent upon Divisions in Religion, turns to the advantage of Christianity; That thus it must be; else how should the Scriptures be fulfilled? But this abates nothing of the sinfulness and unhappiness, or necessity of Amendment.

To guide us then into that; It is very observable, the venom of this Distemper falls not so much upon the several parties in Religion, as upon Religion it self; while we wound one another, Religion is the martyr, lies a bleeding, and even Dying. And while good men lament it, the enemies of it make merry and send gifts one to another, in token of triumph.

The method of cure therefore, is not, for every party to weigh up it self,

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self, and press down others; but to buoy up Religion it self; and that is best done, by preaching, and living *the very Thing*; without distinction of names. If we did but yield it, its own Integrity and universal Goodness; it would soon rise into that honour, it hath lost, by being captivated to Opinions.

For as our humane Nature would be much more beautiful and happy, if cemented by that *philanthropy*, or general love of mankind, so indearingly charged upon us by our Saviour; who demonstrated, that he embraced within his own Immensity, the whole latitude of our nature; without contracting it into the narrowness of a humane person, by the great care he took; That this nature should not be dishonoured, abused, and torn by it self through that bitter Censoriousness,

b 2

The Preface

ousness, Revenge, and Contempt;
men exercise upon one another, even
there where Christ is protested.

So would our Christianity, that is
now evil spoken of, appear, as it is, in
itself, Acceptable to God, and appro-
ved of men, if we could unite in those
comprehensive Interests of Righte-
ousness, Peace, Joy in the Holy-
Ghost, that substantial Christianity;
Those healing wings of the Sun of
Righteousness, In the rays of which
our little differences about Meat and
Drink would play up and down, as
smallest Motes of Humane Frailty,
easily obtaining a mutual pardon:
and that black and most abhorred
Vapor of Irreligion, be forced to dis-
lodg, at so illustrious a Presence.

If there be any Interest to keep a-
foot these Divisions; It is an Interest
of Dishonour, that dares not name it
self;

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felt; It is not only, ^{but} but ^{it is} It is not barely to serve an opinion (much less the Lord Jesus) but the Belly.

3. But to return, from whence I have digressed, upon so great a Cause. Lastly, we may find, in the very notion of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, enough to defend the seasonableness of this Discourse; notwithstanding spreading Irreligion. For it imports a design to dye well: and we see very *Few*, and *those Few* deprived of the common Modesty and Sobriety of mankind; and who thereupon become a horrid Story; but dye at least in a fair and calm temper towards Religion; now if we joyn to this, that of many millions for one, every one dies, as he lives, not only, as the Tree falls, so it lies; but as it hath inclined along its growth, so it falls:

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How great is the necessity then of living well, that we may dye well. For this *Death-Bed Repentance*, that rises and sets at the same time, generally proves but a falling Star. That Repentance only wheels orderly into a higher Orbe, that hath given prooffe; It was a true Light, by shining here for some considerable space.

A good Death receives Being from a holy Life, else there is not such a thing in nature, no not in Grace, except by Miracle of Grace.

Thus far I have made Apology for the seasonableness of this Discourse. In the Discourse it self, I am not conscious of having wandred from the universal Doctrine of Divines in this point: except it should seem too high a strain to place this Repentance, (when true) among Miracles. To justify that, I have the warrant of
Sacred

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Sacred Story, *the Dying Convert*; which being the only example of such a one in Holy Writ, was in the days of the Messias, *that great period of Miracles* singled out, upon that greatest occasion; *viz.* To display the power of the dying Mediator, to forgive sins, not only upon Earth, but in his lowest Humiliation, His very descent into Hell: which argues it a very great Miracle.

Yet I have not trusted the weight of the Discourse to any thing that looks like a private Opinion; but to most avowed Principles, and have therefore reserved my particular sense as the Conclusion of the whole.

I have only to add; There is a National late Repentance, as appears by the unsuccessfulness of that unparalleled Reformation of *Josiah*; Sincere indeed in him, and of full effect:

The Preface to the, &c.

effect: but not in the Body of the Jewish Nation, as appear'd by their Relapses under the following Kings; and therefore, notwithstanding that seeming Return, the Lord turned not from the fierceness of his wrath, wherewith his Anger was kindled against *Judah*, for its guilt in the sins of *Manasseh*; which the Lord would not pardon, and therefore would not give a true Repentance of those evils, they had so long continued in, against all the early Admonitions of the Prophets: *This is the just Paralel of a Death-Bed Repentance.*

The due application of all these Considerations, to every one, into whose hands they may fall, is the earnest, and affectionate Prayer of,

T. B.

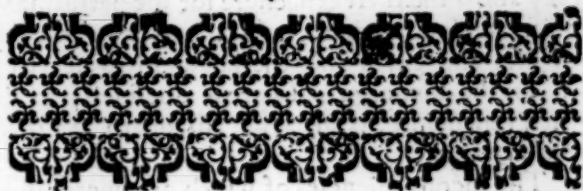
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ERRATA.

In the Preface, p. 11. *v. ἡ ἀνάστασις*. p. 5. l. 1. for power, *v. pour*;
p. 6. l. 13. for there, *v. their*. p. 9. l. 20. *v. ἐκτελέματα*. p. 24. l. 12.
for these, *v. the*. p. 33. l. 10. *v. destruction*. p. 40. l. 17. *v. con-*
tinues. p. 65. l. 24. *v. length*. p. 75. l. 20. *bles*; but they are. p. 79.
l. 9. for saving, *v. seeming*.

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Luk. 23. 39, 40, 41, 42, 43. *And one of the Malefactors that were hanged with him, rayled on him; saying, if thou be the Christ, save thy self and us. But the other answering; said, dost thou not fear God? Seeing that thou art in the same condemnation. And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord remember me, when thou comest into thy Kingdom. And Jesus said unto him; verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.*

THe generality of Men that have been at all acquainted with the name of Repentance, and understood in any Measure the importance, and signification of the thing, acknowledge it beyond all dispute necessary: Yet

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they

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they allow themselves a leisure for the performance of it, and such a leisure, as swallows the whole time of life, and leaves only the last and lowest part of it, for the discharge of so great a business; so that their repentance, if any at all, falls out to be a *Death-Bed Repentance*.

The inconveniencies of which are unexpressibly great, because the lives of men are left naked of that holiness and purity, that should adorn them, and all over blotted with sin, and vanity. Their conversation wants *that light of good Works, that should shine before men, and glorifie God in Heaven. Their life is without form, and void, and darkness is upon the face of it.* And in the end they are cast upon the great Sea of Eternity, as in a Vessel of Paper, a thin, and superficial Repentance.

It is therefore most necessary to use all means, to shew the insufficiency of this Refuge, which most of those, that live in common under the profession of Christianity; designe while they live, to flye too, when they dye. To demolish *this House upon the Sand*; that men may not by hopes of shelter at it, conceived long before hand, be kept off from laying *their Foundation upon a Rock*; which possibly they would do, if these hopes were cut off.

And because this piece of sacred story hath been generally taken, as an instance of great Favour to a late conversion, not that it is indeed so, but that it seems to be so, let it be the Ground of the present Discourse.

For I observe Divines, in their Doctrine concerning the danger of a Dying Repentance, are careful

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careful to wrest out of the hand of presuming Imagination, this example, and to allay the vain confidence built upon it.

Indeed the mistake of it is very fatal, seeing if it be duely considered, there is nothing more forcible against what it is pretended for, than it. It is true, it is a relation of a dying man returning from great sins to God, but so circumstantiated, so defended on all hands against boldness upon it, that there might have been more reason to hope well of last-breath-penitencies, if there had not been a pattern of such a one in all points, as much above the imitation of those of our dayes, as the Heaven is above the Earth. It is such a one, as if God had said of it, if I accept a dying Repentance; behold this, consider it every way, and take notice by it, what a one I will have it. God putting the Cast, and resolving it thus hath given a much more positive determination concerning it, than if the Cast had never been put.

*Ante mihi
fidem latro-
nis ostende
Et tunc tibi
latronis be-
atitudinem
pollicere.*
August.

The end therefore I aim at is to make it evident upon general reasons, and particularly from this instance.

That a *Death-Bed Repentance* is a hazzard so infinitely great, that no man can without folly extremely prodigious commit to so much adventure: An affair of so great importance to an eternal condition.

Hereunto I will raise this Treaty by these degrees.

1. By observing the judgement of Divines concerning this case, and ballancing the most favorable with the more severe.

2. By detecting the Follies that have given a reputation to a *Death-Bed Repentance*.

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3. By examining the most hopeful appearances of this kind of Repentance, and shewing there are plain causes of them very much below the nature of true Repentance, wherewith I will compare them.

4. By observing the extraordinaries, of which the Repentance of this dying Malefactor was composed, because of which it can hardly be drawn into a president.

To all these I will subjoyn pressing considerations on every side; that men should not delay their return to God, to the latter times of life.

*Dr. Taylors
Invalidity
of a late
Repentance.*

For the First, the judgement of Divines in the point, I begin with that severer one; yet built upon great piety, and reason that asserts it a plainly impossible thing, a man on his Death-Bed should repent with that repentance, the Scripture so oft discourses of; and promises pardon to, and threatens the neglect of with perishing, and therefore concludes, a dying man that hath not already repented must needs fall, not into the sin of despair. For who is bound to hope, that hath not the reasons of his hope given him by God? But into the misery of despair: For how miserable is he whom God hath left to the boiling Sea of his own horrors, and thrown him out no Anchor of hope?

However this Sentence seem rigorous, yet when we consider the ponderous Arguments it uses; it may rather amaze us, than provoke one Censure; For First, it is very irreconcilable with the Glory of God, that men who have had the knowledge of God, and been called upon all their lives to give up themselves to him, should be accepted; when they

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they power out to him the lees, and dreggs of life; instead of the generous spirits of it. That he that hath had in his Flock a male, should vow, and Sacrifice to the Lord a corrupt thing, and yet escape the Curse of the deceiver. The expressions of Scripture are innumerable, in which God disavows such prostitutions of his Grace, (as is hereafter to be urged) but seals such, ere they are aware, under hardness of heart, and a reprobate sense, to destruction.

2. It appears impossible, there should be a discharge of the duties of Repentance, when Men are a dying; that they should draw within the hollow of that little span, that is also otherwise incumbred, the vastness of that action, that is necessary to take off the Brawn of a long impenitency.

That a man should live the life of holiness, that is just a dying; that the Tree that hath been always barren, should bring forth good fruit, now it is a hewing down: These things are very contradictory, how can Repentance plant it self in the Soul, and settle Gracious habits there in so short a space? Or in an instant by mortification root out those lusts, and sinful affections, that have been many years eating into the Heart; Repentance must have a time for fruits, and those fruits for ripening and concoction, which a Death-Bed will not afford. So that it cannot be *that Repentance of the Gospel*, but at the best, only some first strokes of it.

3. There must be a living to God, before a Man dyes to God. It is the supream Law, every one must glorify him here on Earth, and finish the work he hath given them to do in the World. They must work
the.

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the works of him that sent them while it is day, before the night cometh, in which no Man can work. After this Men are received into the glory of God.

4. In Repentance, we must be in the same circumstances of Temptation we were in, in the time of sinning. But it will be hard to find in what the state of a dying Man differs from that of him, that is already dead, as to this business of Repentance; but that he may as well be allowed to repent, that is entred into Eternity, as he that stands on the very brink of it.

This censure cannot be injurious to Men living, and in there full opportunity; suppose in speculation, it stretches principles of great weight and truth too far, yet it recompences for it self by the wholesomeness of it to practise, for who can suffer by being necessitated to an early Repentance, so much his duty, so much his safety?

Further it is most prophetick, most undoubtedly true of most Mens late Repentance; That it is too sudden, too Mushrome a birth to have any worthiness in it. This Repentance almost universally withers, afore it growes up, and proves an abortion; whether it come to the tryal of a longer life, wherein it vanishes as a Cloud, and former impiety returns; or whether it pass immediately into Eternity, where it sinks down into misery; for attempting the Regions of life, and wanting the purity that rises thither: It is beaten back with all its pretensions, as a foggy exhalation, that would climb to Heaven, but is forced down, and made to rest below; so that for the universality of *Death-Bed Repentances* this judgment is truly calculated.

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If it should seem too cruel to the dying condition, to smother Men alive with the second death, (as *Hazael* spread upon the dying King a thick cloath dipped in vvater) to stifle, and benumn at once all motions towards God, let us consider vvhat advice it offers against the stupidities of despaire.

When we are fallen into so unhappy a condition, that the vvhole vveight of *Æternity* depends upon a very little moment, It perswades, men vvould do all they can in return to God, though that all must be trusted with the prerogative of mercy, for that mercy vvhich is stated in the promises of the Gospel, and is in ordinary, cannot help them in the great point of salvation, however it may alleviate their condemnation, and lessen their torment.

I may add; if that which appears a Messenger of Death should have a secret reprieve in its instructions, and vvhat seems a Death-bed, prove only a discipline; It may be a happy beginning of a true repentance to him, who lives, after his being near the Grave, to perfect it, according to that of *Job, 33. ver. 22. 23.*

Thus this opinion doth not cut off the Action of its desperate person, and if by that Action, he pass *the needles Eye*, and get through the *strait Gate* of Repentance, and Regeneration; it will be able to give him no resistance: For those to whom the *new-leav'd Gates* of Faith and Repentance open, this Air of discourse cannot barr, that they should not enter into life.

But on the other side, they that are confident, and make themselves sure of Repentance, and Mercy; cannot when they meet the solid obstacles of things, force their vvay by the breath of their Mouth:

but

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but they and their intended Repentance are together locked up in the closeness, and compactedness of those decrees: First, they cannot repent, then they cannot be saved.

To conclude, let such a decision of this case be never so austere; it is a thousand times more just than the delay of our return to God in the contemplation of doing it at the last can be; and the reasons upon which it is planted, are such, that though they may not reach the height designed, yet do they exclude thousands from eternal happiness; and although they may not make good the complement of the censure, yet are they of so awful a regard, and so worthy of all observation, that they are most vehemently to be pressed to the main scope: that Men would by no means trust to this extream Repentance, to which purpose I shall hereafter take further advantage of them.

But let us come to that tenderer apprehension of the generality of Divines, with which I will concur, that all things of opinion and dispute may be taken away in so great a point. Let it then be allowed, that a *Death-Bed Repentance* is no impossibility.

First, in regard of infinite mercy, that cannot be limited; but by it self: Now long impenitency though it be often doomed irrevocably by God in particular generations of men, or persons; yet is not that sin, that *shall never be forgiven*. Nor is it upon that account, that the Scripture saith of some; *It is impossible to renew them to repentance*. So that though there be many examples of such impenitency, that hath proved in the event unpardonable; yet

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yet not from the precise nature of the thing it self : we may rather believe , that as the unmeasurable Being of God hath delighted it self in so many varieties, and gradations of the Creatures down from Angels to the darkeſt foot-ſteps of himſelf in the World : ſo the unſearchable riches of his Grace is made known in all kinds of pardons. As therefore it hath choſen ſome of the worſt of ſinners for the ſerfs of their ſins, chiefſt of ſinners, and brought them home ; ſo ſome that have made the utmoſt adventure of continuance in ſin , that in theſe manifold Glaſſes, it might be ſeen, *where ſin hath abounded, grace hath abounded much more.*

2. Though the time of this repentance be ſhort, and narrow, and the duties of Repentance exceeding long and broad ; yet where there are found the true ſignatures of Repentance unfeigned ; God beholds the fruit in the ſeed and root, he knows the perfection of his own creation, though Infant, or we may conceive ſuch *inſpiration* in repentance, Repentance born out of due time, as *Paul* was in the Apoſtleſhip, ſuddenly accompliſhed, though they had not the regular time of forming, *ed Cypri an de cana Domini.* like a Nation brought forth in a day. c “ Thus thou “ Lord annointeſt in a moment Herdſmen into Pro-
“ phets, Shepherds into Kings, Publicans thou or-
“ daineſt Apoſtles, nor doth their languor take
“ leiſure to remove, whom thou recovereſt, but in that
“ very moment thou makeſt them every whit whole,
“ wherein they have thee for their Phyſician.

3. Although there be according to the general Rule, a neceſſity of living to God here in the World ; yet God may diſpenſe with the continuation, or drawing out of the Action of it in theſe late peni-

rents, as we easily allow in the case of Infants, or men dying within short space after a Repentance begun, upon sad consideration and not in the exigency of a sickness.

In the mean time, it is not at all supposed, that God dispenses with the sincere preparations and resolvedness of the mind to that Action; but that they must be most true, sound and unfeigned, and the very Action it self according to the time high, full and most significant; and as extraordinary as the Repentance it self.

4. Although the condition of a man dying do in many regards nearly resemble the state of him, that is already in eternity, as he is under a necessity of leaving sin, and the world, and set at a distance from temptation; yet it differs in that great circumstance, that he is not *in Termine*, he is not fixt upon his unchangeable point, he hath not undergone that sentence that immediately passes upon the soul removed, and so may not neither have suffered that more secret one, conceived by God upon long provocation. The whole time of life may be a time of grace, and he that hath not yet been concluded by the incommutability of Eternity may hear the voice of Christ, and enter into his rest.

*d Quando
isthinc ex-
cessum sue-
ris, nullus
jam panni-
sentia lo-
cus. Libr.
ad Deme-
trianum,
e In ipso
adhuc
mundo ma-
nent nulla
punitia
sua est, &c.*

d St. Cyprian, who is positive, "That whenever a man is launched into another world, he finds no room for repentance; he is out of the climate of repentance, who is beyond the line of Time. All kind of penances which are a secondary satisfaction under the sufferings of Christ are then desperate and fruitless. Yet he allows the greatest liberty to repentance in this Life; For he says, e "No repentance is late, that is earlier than

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"than the grave. He sayes, Here a man takes hold
 "of life, or loses it for ever. Yet he grants, *f* It is
 "possible by repentance, though we are just a dying, *Ad im-*
 "to be safely landed in a blessed immortality. And *mortalita-*
 "g when the soul hath left its inner residences, and *tem sub ip-*
 "is now sitting upon the dying lips before its last *sâ morte*
 "farewel to the body, and when in haste to begone, *transiit*
 "yet even then infinite Clemency disdains not Re- *De canâ*
 "pentance, nor accompts that late t. aris true, nor *Domini.*
 "deprives that of pardon, which hath the free and *g In eodem*
 "full act of the soul in return to him. *Et quacunque*
necessitas, &c. "Yea though, as he goes on, this *articulo*
 "repentance had its first rise from necessity, yet *temporis*
 "neither that, nor the immenseness of guilt, nor *cum jam*
 "straitness of time, nor the lateness of the Season, *anima se-*
 "nor the foulness of former actions foreprize from *stinet ad*
 "pardon when the humiliation is sincere, and the *extremum*
 "soul exchanges impure delights for those of Holi- *&c.*
 "ness, without counterfeit or dissimulation. It may
 seem in all those discourses that he had forgot to
 enter a caution against presumptions but it is to be *h In Libr.*
 considered while he thus frankly poures out him- *ad Deme-*
 self, he was one while inviting *trionum.*
 b persecutors of Chri- *Credite &*
 stianity into the confessions of it, whom he would not *vivite &*
 have debarred with the sense of so great past offen- *qui nos ad*
 ces against it: another while designing against the *tempus per-*
sequimini
in eternum
gaudete
nobiscum.
i Velit no-
lis Nova-
tus Flare-
ticus omni
tempore
Dei gratia
recipit
penitentia
 He else, which took upon it to tye up the
 freeness of grace as he saies, "i In spight of the He-
 "retick *Novatus* the throne of Grace is early and
 "late accessible to true repentance. This therefore
 is not to be pres'd beyond the design of the excellent
 and holy Writer, but will very well agree with all
 that I am presently to add as a Ballance to this
 favour.

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Daille.

favourable judgment for such a Repentance.

For as that most prudent discourse of the right use of the Fathers teaches us; we must always attend their scope, in the pursuit of which they were often transported towards the other extreme.

But that a Dying repentance in the nature of the thing is no impossibility, we have fullest assurance in the example of the Text, wherein we see one in a moment conceived, brought forth, and even a grown man in repentance, one passing through some short Instants of holy action and entering into Paradise like Aaron's Rod budding, blossoming; and bringing forth ripe Almonds in a night, and laid up in the Sanctuary for ever.

That it was most probably the first call he had to Repentance, agrees fully with the intention of my Discourse, which granting so much as a possibility, would yet take all advantage against the easie confidence of those, that living dayly under the offers of Grace, and yet despising them commit themselves first to the intentions, and at last to the faint motions of a late Repentance. To whom that admonition of St. *Augustin* is most seasonable concerning the instance we have in hand. *k* If we respect his opportunities for attaining faith, his repentance was not late, but

k Ad confequendam
fidem non
fuit illi ex-
trema hor-
sed prima.
Nec Reli-
gionem an-
te nec
Christum
scivisse non
remedia
status sui
in momenta
ultima in-
felici frau-
do posuit.
Serm. 120
de Temp.

early and soon, he took the very first season, as soon as ever he descried Christ and Religion he embraced them. He did not wretchedly cheat himself of the remedies of his miserable condition by adjourning the use of them to a late and uncertain futurity, which seldom or never succeeds well.

His consideration leads me therefore from the most favourable the light side of this milder sentence, to the black and dark part of it.

That

Of a Death-Bed e^rpentanc.

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That is to say, There is an infinite peradventure, whether God will give repentance at the last or not, for this Grace being acknowledged extraordinary, if it were common, it would cease to be extraordinary,

It is most undoubted in Scripture, God is often ^{Heb 3.8,9} provoked gainst men to swear, *they shall never enter into his rest, when they have long tempted him, and erred from his ways.*

The Heart is dayly hardened by the deceitfulness of sin, till it grew to that the Apostle calls ^{Rom. 4.21} *incuriosos* a heart that is irrepentable, or that cannot be repented of; Customes in sin long settled become like *the Ethiopians skin and the Leopards spots*, that cannot be changed. And though it is true, the spirit of God is not hindered in its inspirations; but that it bloweth where it listeth, yet the course of it is so attemper'd to the state, and motion of the soul it self, that it most usually takes the opportunity so generally requisite to the settling a constitution and temper in us, that is, the freest, and most unprejudic'd, and larger spaces of a mans life: So that whenever it workes upon Dying men, I mean those that have had the free use of the means of Grace or old; It works by such a prerogative, that a man may as well expect a prerogative of providence to bear him walking upon the Sea, because it did once so to *Peter*, as this.

Most even of the fairest appearances of this kind of Repentance miscarry having no true virtue in them, and though in regard of their vehemency, they are called early seekings of God, yet (which is horrible to be spoken) they are as it were prepared for

Pro, 1. 28. for the triumphs of the Justice and indignation of God over those, who would have none of his Counsel in former times, but despised all his reproofe.

Lastly, Whoever seeing and knowing casts himself with design upon Repentance at death, is like to fall headlong by tempting God; and expecting he should stand ready for him with that Grace at last, he hath so long resisted and refused.

And now when this judgment of Divines with this Ballance upon it is compared with the former, the result will be only this, The kindest Divinity in the point, and that seems to do the most favor, is very dreadful, and leaves such men in a condition next to desperate, which is but an aggravation of the danger, when what men would choose to appeal to, so far condemns them.

It is then agreed on all Hands, That for any man to live so as if he did contrive & forecast a Dying Repentance (although it be yielded him, It is no impossibility) as the safe expedient, first of an Irreligious life, free from the troublesome thoughts of a present amendment, and then of a secure passage into eternity, is first an exceeding Irreligion and immorality in it self; and then to run so desperate a risque and adventure for an immortal soul; that he is a pardonable madman, in comparison of such an one, that drinks a deadly poyson, because he hath heard there is a certain Antidote in the world, that will expel it, though he cannot tell whether he can have it at all, much less whether time enough for his necessity; and lastly whether the endeavours he uses for it will not be deluded with the counterfeits of it, it being supposed they are thousands for one of the true kind; and he thereby

thereby perish, pleasing himself with the hopes he hath it, when he hath indeed but a likeness of it.

I come now to the second Proposal, which is to 2. Head.
make inquiry, seeing the case is thus, as it every way appears to be, how the name or notion of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, as such an universal Refuge came up in the world; for it is a new Repentance (*much like those new-come-up Gods Moses speaks of*) that Christianity and the Gospel know not. Deut. 32.
17. The Scriptures that treat most professedly of Repentance, always insist upon it as a reformed course of Life, to be undertaken even now, while the proposals of Grace, and Reconciliation are made to us; and only by very silent intimations, the track of which is hardly discerned, leave it possible, that God should by miracle save some very few out of the Fire, and pull them as Brands out of the Burning; by giving them Repentance at the last. Whereas this is now become the only repentance in use, and hath devoured the other, as if to press men upon it were to torment them before their time, and to lessen the validity of this were to take away the mercy of God, and deny the Grace that is so free and universal. Let us search therefore how this sort of Repentance hath come into such Repute. And if we observe, we shall find: it first rising from the intimate sense the conscience hath of the necessity of Repentance. For were it not so clear and evident a Duty, *a Death-bed Repentance* had never been heard of, most would choole to go out of the world as they have lived in it, not suffering any degree of the trouble of conscience, or vexing themselves with reflections upon an unholy and ill-spent life. As men have chosen to live freely and

Jer. 2. 32. and uninterruptedly in forgetfulness of God, and an eternal condition *days without number*, so would they choose to dye, were there not a Law within, that however it hath lyen covered vwith the dust of sensuality, yet is now restored to its authority, and urges the soul vwith the terror of punishment for so long disobedience.

And secondly this necessity of repentance, though secretly understood, yet vvas not sufficiently considered in the time of Health, for had it been equally regarded, it had not been now to begin. He that had rightly measured it, vould not for a thousand Worlds so have adjourned it.

These two things then meeting so oft together, *viz.* The necessity of Repentance; and the neglect of it all along our life: the necessity it should be performed some time, ere men go out of the vvorld: and the neglect of it in the freer opportunities of life. These, I say, bring forth hasty motions of it at last: For it losing nothing of its necessity by its delay, it must be done, as vvell as it may be at that time: even as the last moments, vvherein businesses of great consequence are to be dispatched; press for expedition the more earnestly, because they must be done then or never, though it often falls out, the time is so far past, they suffer not only much disadvantage, but even defeat by the delay.

The Notion of a *Death-bed Repentance* then we may perceive rising from the great indisposition to repent, vvwhile the pleasures of sin are in their season, and flourish, and men in health and strength to enjoy them; and from the necessities of Repentance falling upon them at the last, and vvringing from them

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them sometimes very high acknowledgments of God and an eternal condition, passionate expressions of the folly, evil and vanity of former life, Desires of mercy, professions of strong resolvedness to serve God, and if they had many lives to give God, they would give them all. All which being so unusual to hear formerly out of such mouths, and coming from Dying men, for whose sayings we have a natural regard, Charity towards them, and willingness to hope well of them gives these semblances, the reputation of Repentance. To which may be added, That those who are Guides and Seers in Religion too often, *errante Clave*, by too liberal an Absolution open the Kingdom of Heaven to such, and taking the instruments of a foolish Shepherd to themselves, heal the hurt of their souls slightly; so that their Repentance is sanctified here, and though it miscarry in the other World, yet the miscarriage is hid also in that other World.

From all this hath arisen a down-right opinion of this kind of Repentance as the only *οσιον παρηγοριον* the prudent expedient, that compounds two so different Interests, first that of a worldly conversation, to which it gives no hinderance; then that of eternal life in appearance, because it assumes the promises of mercy to it self, especially those gracious assurances in *Ezek. 18.* and *Chap. 33.* it reckons as made on purpose for it. All which argues a very vile sense of both the justice and mercy of God; of his justice as if it had no authority, of his mercy as if it had no sense of honour.

And lastly it is grown into a general expectation, that however ill and carelessly of God men have lived

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here.

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here, yet they should go out of the world with good words of him and religious professions, as an Incense to their memory and a Dirge to their souls into the happiness of an everlasting condition.

Psal. 49. 11
11, 12, &c.

Thus they call Repentance and Heaven *after their own name*. *This their way is their folly; yet their posterity, men of like inclinations, approve their sayings; because such men (as they speak) go away like Lambs, but as the Scripture says, like senseless Sheep are laid in the grave, and Death feeding upon them; the error is not discovered till the morning: when the upright have dominion over them; that is, infinitely excel them, and their counterfeit Repentance, which cannot stand in judgment, nor they in the congregation of sincere penitents.*

Psal. 12.

Now this account I have given of a *Death-Bed Repentance* obtaining among us, is too comprehensive; yet I must acknowledge, That there are many whose Judgments are more enlightned, and the sentiments of their consciences quicker than to be satisfied at so easie a rate; who yet fall into the common unhappiness of not having repented, till they come to dy: I will therefore inquire further, why many who are able to feel before hand the necessities of a speedy Repentance, and also to draw their Death so near them, as to dy dayly in the sense of death; and thereby further perceive those necessities, do not yet repent dayly, but betray themselves to an *Evening or Twilight Repentance*.

The resolution of this lies not only in the immoderate love of sin and its pleasures, and the too low apprehension of God and eternal things, (though these are always present in the case) but chiefly it lies in the great confidence such men have in the present

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sent time, not sensible of the continual waste of it; Under the favour of which they put away the evil day far from them, and stretch themselves upon this moment, that they may take their full ease and satisfaction: In the mean while stifling the thoughts of Dying and Judgment. Were it not for this, no other reason would encourage them to delay their Repentance, for when this fails, all others generally fail also, and therefore none are so passionately moved as such when they come to dy.

Amos 6.

This cloud that is but as big as a mans Hand (*our days are as an Hand-breadth*) yet looks like the whole Heaven; It stands as a firmament over their heads; It looks like an eternity to man. In this time Repentance finds as little place with them, as it is like to do with God in the Evening of Life.

Plal. 39. 6.

In this occasion the wild Asses of the wilderness snuff up the wind at their pleasure, and none can turn them. The lust of the Flesh, the lust of the Eye, and the pride of Life swallow all, and can spare nothing; Yet in the midst of all this the soul promises it self, It will ere long take a season of recollecting it self, and that it will do it time enough, so timely as to leave space sufficient for a large exercise of Repentance, for although it is but upon the edges and skirts of Time, yet it seems to it self to be upon the Center, and in its imagination commands the future, as if it were in its own hand; so that through the endless returns of pleasure, and business, through indisposedness to holy and serious Action, through intentions and purposes of being better hereafter, it slips down, or ever it is aware, into the lowest of life, and hath the business of Repentance lying whole and undiminished upon

Ierc. 2. 24

its hand: *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep, deceives men; till their last end comes as an Armed man.* The hopes that to morrow will be as to day, and much more abundant, so as to leave enough for sadder thoughts, befools men, till the very Course of Time rowes them before they think of it upon Eternity.

Of great moment therefore it is to number our days rightly, that we may know how frail we are, and apply our Hearts to wisdom. For this time of life though it be but little yet it boasts great things. This Vapor stretches out it self as far as it can; It rejoices in its own boastings which are evil. In the mean while the moments of it are winged; and fly from us; they glide away, and we cannot, except we bring them to strict Account, take hold of them to graft any thing upon them: How does to day like an Eagle, or Post, or swift Ship, or Arrow get from us leaving no path. And if we offer to take the account, How many things snatch it from us, as an impertinent disturber from him that is catching slippery numbers. Here is wisdom, let him that hath it count the number of Life, for it is the number of a man. A short number. It is all but Dying man. And yet it requires great ingenuity, The Ingenuity of a man, that is indeed a Man, to find it. But he that misses it, is found at the end of his days a Fool, and findes that dreadful Reward of a Fool, that the great God, that formed all things, gives to that Fool as well as to the Transgressor: But those that are wise shine as the Sun in the Firmament.

Thus far I have insisted upon the Accounts, How this Baptism of Repentance for the Dead came in upon Christianity, that is, How it comes to pass that men

will not be baptized with this Baptism till they are given over for dead men, like those Clinici of the first times, that delayed their Baptism to their last Bed, of whom some expound that place, 1 Cor. 15 29.

But the mistake in this case (though that passed not without some note of Disgrace) is in a point of much higher consequence, and so far more dangerous, and hath also less of reasonable pretence, for while they thought, Baptism washed away all past sins, and was but once to be done; It seemed a necessary providence to take the full Benefit of it at the last, upon which account Tertullian even expostulates, *Quorsum festinat innocens aetas ad remissionem peccatorum*, while he discourses of Infant-Baptisms.

Whereas the water of Repentance is never forbidden, but may be both evenly drawn through the whole course of life, and often renewed to supply the defects of it self: which is one signification of that *μετάνοια ἀμετέμελητος* that repentance, which is always promoted but never retracted. Nor do I indeed doubt, but the water of Baptism, wherever it hath effect, is a Spring, that from the first moment wherein it is truly received, runs down with a free current upon the whole course of life, and is therefore universally to be applied. And whenever converting Grace works, It leads back the soul, though through many years past, to the virtue of that Sacramental Fountain.

But to return; Although these Accounts I have now given of a *Death-bed Repentance*, obtaining among us infold the whole multitude of dying Penitents, yet according to the former state given I do not deny, but that some very rare Example there may

Vid. Eñium in la-cum.

Acts 10: 47

1 Cor. 7. 10

Operatur in Baptismo penitentia, tanquam in fundamentis. August. Expos. Ep. ad Roman.

may be, giving a better sense to this sort of Repentance; Examples of the Grace of God, acting in a way of Prerogative, as hath been said, and working effectually the truth of repentance in some; upon whom he laies the hand of his Salvation and Rescue, while they stand upon the very last-minutes of the season of Grace, and are just dropping down into Hell: and guides them to take their latest steps in the ways of Life, wherein they had hitherto been strangers; upon whom a great miracle is wrought; that they should in their almost perfected motion to endless ruin be stopt, and when they had just finished their course thither, they should yet be transplanted into the way everlasting.

But I proceed to the third Head. To examine the most hopeful appearances of this kind of Repentance, and to shew there are plain causes of them, much below the nature of true Repentance.

And first in the general: It is no wonderful thing to find men in a Paroxysme, in a high passion of seeking after God, when they are a dying. It is indeed more strange to find any so sotted, so fear'd, *that their spirits seem only to go downward: They are Beasts while they live, and as such they go down to the dead.*

Ecc'e, 3.

18. &c.

Psal, 73: 4

Iob 21: 13

Jude 12

Exo, 15: 5

1 Sam. 2,

37

There are no bands in their Death; They go down in a moment. There is not a moment between the first and second death of the soul, not a moment of life between, not so much as of the life of natural conscience. *They are twice dead*, dead in the common corruption of Nature wherein they are born. Dead in the loss of natural Principles: *pulled up by the roots*, there's nothing to quicken or move in them. This is the amazing Stupor: *They dy like a stone*; they plung

plung down with the whole weight and force of impenitency.

This way of dying hath certainly greater punishment, and heavier condemnation, and though it seem more choosable than a fruitless Repentance, yet doubtless Eternity makes a difference, though not such an one, as should give any one confidence to imbarque into it in a *Coffin-Repentance*.

But whether it be rather to be chosen or not, this is past question: It is unavoidable to some, whether they will or no, they are surpriz'd with thoughts, what will become of them for ever, and few men but have thoughts this way at such a time above ordinary.

But I intend to speak of the fairest and best spread Repentance that is found upon a Death-bed. That which gives the liveliest Hopes of it self, that it is true and sincere; not such an one that to a serious Observer betrays it self, not either that forced compofure, to the expectation of the world, which looks for a solemn profession of God from every one that dies; nor an ignorant and formal repentance, but a repentance that hath much of vigor, and inward affection, and is driven on by great knowledg and light; that is accompanied with much sorrow, and very considerate apprehensions of eternal things: And if such an one be so questionable, what can become of others?

There is no reason any Repentance should be the better esteemed because men are dying. but much the less. Now vvhile men are living a thousand of these seeming changes for the better are evidently confuted without more ado, by after returns to vvicked-

*Apud il-
lum Cordis
Interpre-
tem Ars
non admis-
situr ad
salutem
August.
Serm. 120.*

wickedness; and they that have to do with such shew
of reformation, have no regard of them, nor of the
persons for them. Now God, who is the exact
searcher of Hearts, can much less be imposed upon
by the fairest appearances; nor can men wise accord-
ing to the rules of Scripture be easily well perswaded
of them, and when they are best perswaded, there
must needs be a very trembling consideration of so
great a Hazard.

But to come more particularly to what I have pro-
posed, *viz.* To shew that Repentance is a Height,
to which these general motives of this late Repen-
tance can never mount the soul. In which I will
begin with the descriptions of true Repentance, in
that, wherein it is most difficult (not to say impossi-
ble) to rise to it upon a Dying bed.

Repentance in all the parts of it, is the fullest,
clearest act of the Soul and Judgment, wherein it is
most perfectly it self. Remove a man never so far
from all kind of Fears, from the appearances of
Death, if he were to live Ages, he would be of the
same sense. He that truly repents, doth not snatch
up Repentance, as an expedient for a present extre-
mity, but chooseth it as an entrance into the best state
of Life, and lives always, and rests himself in this
choice. For however this may be introduced by
very troublesome and tumultuous motions, yet it is it
self the easie sitting down of the Soul with abundant
pleasure, and satisfaction in the abhorrence of sin,
and love of Holiness, in the dislike of vanity and sen-
suality, in the approbation of Heavenly purity of
Heart and life. It is not a trance wherein sin lyes
dead, and a man is in a rapture of goodness for a time,

bur

*The same
manu. 2o
sic in manu
manu. 2o
Hieroc.
Carm. Pyth
Pura vo.
Lupratum
Dunigio.
Cypr.*

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but a most settled state. *Godly sorrow, that worketh Repentance, worketh carefulness, fear, reveng, desire,* 2 Cor. 7. 11
by these accomplisheth a Repentance to Salvation; 1 Pet. 1. 6
 hath no after pain or trouble, no *μίσαιμι*. These
 affections are preparations, Repentance enters as a
 Soul into these, which is a still, solid, clear Act of
 Reason renewed, and a mind that gives an uni-
 form vote at all times. A change that is never chang'd
 back again, no more than things can put of them-
 selves, or evil it self become good. It is therefore
 upon fullest deliberation to choose with *Joshuah, I*
and my house, those whom I can govern, will serve Josh. 24. 19
the Lord. It is *ingaging the Heart to approach to God,*
the joyning our selves to him by an everlasting Covenant, 1 Pet. 30. 11
never to be forgotten. and 30. 5 *The cleaving to him with full pur-* Acts 11. 23
pose of Heart; when all forerunning affections are
 laid, and quiet, or worn out, this judgment still
 remains, and raiseth other affections like it self, that
 ever remain vvith it; into vvhich the spirits of the
 former are extracted, and vvherein they exercise
 all the true power they had. But now on a Death
 Bed there is often a great commotion raised, a loud
 blustre of passion never arriving at this point, at
 this settlement; But if a man should live after, it
 would go off, as Clouds and Storms, that when
 they have spent themselves vanish and lye down: And
 when a man dies, it is to be fear'd, that as they
 were raised by approach to the unappeasable tempests
 of darkness, so they are hurried along with their
 violence.

It is carefully to be observed, that there is in true
 Repentance a due proportion betwixt the contrite-
 indignation of the soul against past sin, and the love
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and

and zeal it hath for Holiness: whereas in *Death-Bed Repentances*, it is ofteneft found, that there is either a terrifying presence only of former sins, appearing to the affrighted conscience, without a more hopeful indication of the soul truly composed to righteousness: or else some high flying resolutions, or better life afterward, offered, as a kind of Bribe to the patience and mercy of God, in hopes of present deliverance, or at best, as a ransom from Hell and eternal damnation: but without a deep sense of the guilt and evil of past sins, or the just apprehension of that continually running issue of corruption, that is still defiling anew. Either of these is a main Errour, and pernicious: For if on the one side the Heart in a rage be forced to cast out some sins for the turbulency of them, if it be not immediately filled with better guests, *Seven other wicked spirits are ready to enter, and make the last state of that man worse than the first.* For Repentance is no void space, no silent, or unactive state, but when it hath dislodged lusts, furnishes and fills the soul with the best things, and carries the vigor of a mans action to the best effect: *when by repentance a man ceases to do evil, he learns to do well, and brings forth fruits meet for repentance, and amendment of life.*

On the other side, he that seems to make a hasty motion to Holiness without due sense of sin, first thinks to overrule the method God hath set, who requires humiliation, godly sorrow, anger, revenge, fear, as preparing to Repentance: and further, he conceits a freedom to himself, when he is fetter'd and bound, without a power given him from God, he offers to cast out Devils with ease that cannot be cast out but.

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but by fasting and prayer; (that is) severe courses of self abasement, and lowliest dependances together with earnestest application to the Grace of God. These unclean spirits therefore, that dissemble a retreat, return immediately, and make a prey of the deluded soul. As 19.
14. &c.

Although Heaven and Hell, happiness and misery take up the thoughts of the true penitent, yet not separated from God and Christ, but as it were melted into the sense of God angry, and the desire of attonement with him in *Jesus Christ*. Happiness and misery considered apart are not the object of the gracious soul: But God and Christ considered apart are an infinitely sufficient reason of Repentance. The clear love of God towards the soul, as a Father in Christ without reflections upon happiness, is though not the single, yet the paramount consideration in Repentance unfeigned. But men a dying are generally so over possessed with the terrors of an eternal suffering, and meer desires of Freedom from pain, and of well-being, and so in haste, that they generally miss these higher considerations, which being further of not only from corrupt nature, but even from natural conscience, are not commonly espied, but therefore argue greater sincerity, and truth of Heart.

The truest Repentance lies in the bosome of Faith, the apprehensions of the love and goodness of God in Christ melt the soule, and give it most perfect Separation from sin, the most effectual purification of the Heart: all which express the height of repentance. Upon the soft fire of the pardoning goodness of God, the soul most kindly distills into

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repent-

repentant tears. Here flows that Spirit of Grace, and ingenuous goodness, which bringeth forth the clearest and holiest affection towards God.

But at the time we are now speaking of; It is very seldom, that either horror or presumption do not swallow all: Presumption, where there is little sense or judgment of the Case. Horror, where the judgment is clearer and the sense quicker, for every thing disposes now rather to Fear, *and to the spirit of Bondage*; and a man naturally does all he does under a servile dread of God, and his eternal Justice. And though there may be much mention of Christ, and desire of mercy through him; yet it is but as a malefactor convicted beseeches the mercy of the Judge, no otherwise than as of a Judge: So such call out for the mercy of God to pardon them, but still as a Judge, not with the *Spirit of the Son sent into the Heart, the spirit of Adoption crying Abba, Father*. Not with that Love that casteth out unworthy Fear. And indeed how can it be otherwise, there having been *no acquaintance with God in the way*, but a long enmity; and the time now too strait for a free and full consideration of the riches of Grace, such as may still an awakened conscience: Fear presses in every way, and shuts out Faith. What can now redeem the soul from this hellish Terror, but a light from Heaven immediately darting into it; a Grace above that Grace, that ordinarily saves men; for a well settled trust and confidence in mercy according to the general Rule, is not, but after some sad debates, and experimental consultations, that have passed between the sense of sin, and the affiancing acts of the soul upon Christ. This Repentance then is in great danger

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of missing the spirit of the Gospel, and falling into the rank of those repentances of *Cain, Esau, Judas*.

Thus I have endeavoured to shew, that though we suppose a Dying man to spread his soul and thoughts every way, and to all the parts of Repentance; yet it is extremely to be suspected, there will want the true and right quality of them; in regard of the very disadvantageous circumstances, wherein such an one is found; and the great unfitness of the soul at that time, to begin to do any thing worthy, to which it hath not been before inured, or if it did begin, it would be much more unlikely *to bring forth fruit* (as our Saviour speaks) *to perfection*.

Luke 8.14.

I add nothing of the exercises of a full and well grown Repentance, whereby it is dayly espying the risings of sin, and suppressing them, and filling up the defects of Holiness and Obedience; because they are not to be thought possible in the point I am now speaking of, and I have already given a resolution in that case.

I shall now set my self to find out the low causes, that are alway to be suspected to have the great influence upon such a *latter end penitency*.

In general therefore, we must take notice, that there are several vapors of misapprehension, rising upon the Soul, when we are a dying, that do so disguise it to it self, and disfigure the true face of it, that from thence arise dangerous mistakes concerning a mans condition towards God.

We see into how many shapes upon ordinary occurrences we change, and how easily we exchange them for quite different, without any good cause; what continual Ebbs and Flows there are of the humours,

mours, and how do these cast the ballance of the superiour soul? One man is every hour some several sorts of men.

How much more do great Accidents, and removes out of one condition into another alter us? Which yet are but the sudden and just now state of our minds upon such alterations, which not continuing we return to our former figure, *Unstable and weak as water*, we take the form of every vessel we are put into; who knows then whether his Dying Repentance be any more than the mould, not of his mind, but of his dying condition approaching him big with so great a change? We know many things befall us in our lives, which put a greater sense of Religion upon us, than we find at other times: and yet how variable we are, *our goodness at such times is as the morning Dew*, *and as the early Dew is goeth away*. How often are we from the occasions of mercies, afflictions, fears, hopes, good discourses carried into high apprehensions of God? And we lose them again we know not how: Now out of doubt a dying condition of any thing we meet with in the World is most apt to move us upon God, and a sense of him. But can we think those fleeting shoots of the Soul, that have no certainty, are accepted for Repentance?

How strangely doth Melancholy, and oppressions of that transform men? which when it falls upon the motions of conscience, gives us strong imaginations of eternal things; which yet being nothing but the cast of that Melancholy upon the thoughts, when that is removed, they are quite of another hue.

It is evident the Mind sees much through the Body,

Of a Death-Bed Repentance.

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dy, and the representations are coloured by its temper; as the Eye sees through yellow or green Glass, differently from the things themselves. So the Serenity or Cloudiness of the humours makes a different reflexion of things upon the mind, and the liveliness or heaviness of the Spirits incline us to very varying apprehensions.

Now what time is more like to be so incumber'd with these Clouds and Vapours than a dying Hour? When every thing is ready to contribute them, and nothing to scatter them. If then natural conscience, and implanted sense of God together with the notions given us from Scripture pass through these, they become very impressivè, and affecting for the time, and yet he much mistakes Repentance, vvho thinks it no more, than a fit of religious Melancholy.

But let us inquire after some more settled, and constant causes of these penitential motions near Death, and vve shall find many very likely to be so, that are not yet vvorthy of true Repentance, and therefore what springs from them, is not accepted before God.

1. When men find all their Being in the world at an end, and feel themselves falling, they know not vvither. It is no strange thing they should catch at God, and that they may take hold of him, at Holiness also; Seeing ingrafted Principles together with general discourse teach every one, how dear Holiness is to God.

If God and Goodness vvère no more than imaginary things: It vvould be no vvonder, if they vvho are tossed off the World, and throwvn over board from it, should snatch at them: if there vvère no more in the case than

than this, that every one hath heard so much speech, and talk of them among men. For to him that hath nothing in reality, even a shadow, a phancy are valuable. Men that are dropping through the Ayre, or sinking under water without consultation offer at everything they meet with.

In great extremities short of Death, they that are bereft of all worldly assistance, fly to the Divine succours, though as *Jonah's* Marriners they pray to an Idol instead of the true God, and their Devotion is no better than Superstition, which is but a phancy in Religion. What strange thing then is it, for nature to cry out for God, and Christ, for pardon of sin, to be delivered from Hell, and to have Heaven for an everlasting Rest, when all things else evidently fail as they do in Death; and when not only phancy, and general opinion, but most substantial reason, enlightened by the Scripture provoke up a man to it even for Self-preservation.

Isa. 7. 14. Yet this differs but little from *howling upon our Beds for Corn, and Vine, and Oyle*; for though the things differ much in their nature, yet the esteem men have of them, and the desire they have after them is much upon the same ground; for these spiritual things appear to that natural sense of Self-preservation, as necessary in Death, as the other do in Life and Health.

But if the approaches of Death happen to be again drawn off, the value of spiritual things removes with them, and the things of this world, with all the sensual and sinful delights of it, return to their former price: which argues the ineffectualness of this cause of Repentance, and the unacceptableness of the Repentance it self to God, that flows from its
God

God disclaims men, that have never come to him before their extremity, and come then only because of it. *In the time of their trouble: they will say, Arise,* ^{Jer. 2. 27.} *and save us: But where are thy Gods that thou madest? Let them arise if they can save thee,* thus to such Dying men crying out to him God saies, Let your former lusts and pleasures now be your Happiness. *Fools and scorers,* that would not be warned, *call upon God* ^{Psa. 1. 14.} *in their calamity, and seek him early, when the whirlwind of their distractions hurries them, but cannot make him hear, cannot find him.*

2. Suppose the desires after God, and eternal Happiness, with all the retinue of those desires rise not, so much, from the necessities of remove from this Life, and sensible supports, but immediately from the sight of eternal things themselves: yet will not this conclude the Repentance sincere. For we may easily pitch upon several so plain reasons of these quick apprehensions of another world, that it is much more strange, if any man be not struck with them; and they that are, are not in greater extasies of these considerations, than that most dy in some fair inclinable temper towards them, and others are extraordinarily surprized with them, yet without true Repentance.

For First, If it were no more, but the leisure, and uninterestedness of the mind in all worldly things, that Death brings: It is no wonder that the Action of it should immediately, and necessarily flow upon God; for it being always in action, and motion from its very nature, and God having made it for himself; and the manner of its living here in the world being a slavery willingly undertaken for the service of the

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Body,

Body, and the enjoyment of this present Life, in its being fallen from God: It is nothing strange, that that drudgery being now at an end, and the chains wherein it was held, just a breaking, it should fall upon God, and spiritual objects, whither the stream of it was prepared to run, and which are most truly its own business. For the distance being so wide, and irreconcilable between man, and this earth in Death; the very having nothing else to do must carry him upon the future state; seeing his soul is such a being as cannot naturally lye still, and that state is all, that it hath to work upon, and further then that, it is so nearly allied to it.

Secondly, The very loosening and uncementing the Soul from the Body, wherein it dwelt, and wherein the motions of it were restrained, hath been thought very probably to give some men lesser degrees of those advantages near their death, which naked and free spirits not inclosed and pent up in bodies have, whereby they have been able to make conjectures of future things, and to speak prophetically. The less the Soul is bound to work by the Body, the higher are its operations. All extraordinary motions of the Soul are a kind of ravishment from Sense. Those great prophetick Blessings of *Isaac* and *Moses* were near their Dying. It is therefore very easie to be thought, that when the Soul and Body are ready to cleave asunder, and the Spirit to be unfodered from Fle'h, that it should make a higher flight towards eternal things.

*Stulti enim
quum re-
missi & li-
beri sunt
futura pro-
spiciunt, ex
quo intelli-
gitur qua-
les futuri
sint quum
se plane
corporis
vinculis
relaxave-
runt. Cice-
ro de Senectute.
Gen. 49.
Deut. 32.
cap 33.*

The nearer every thing is to its own residence, the more vehement is its motion said to be thither. So there may very well be quick sallies of the Soul to-
wards.

wards eternity, before it enters into it, when it is so near that everlasting Receptacle of it self.

Thirdly, We may observe in the experience of all times, every appearance of the other world hath strange effects of fear, and affrightment upon mens minds: vhen any one is entring then into that whole World, it may vvell put him upon purifying himself, more than they that fall upon *Leviathan*. Vhen men are just upon that Region of Spirits, what appalements of mind and strong vworking of thoughts must there needs be? Much more if the Soul have any sense of its approach to the infinite Holiness of God, at vwhose rebuke the pillars of Heaven tremble; vwhose presence astonishes the purer spirits of Angels, and beates down the souls of good men to the Dust, as of *Moses, Iob, Isaiah, &c.* in his interviewes vwith them. How much more of those that have never thought of God, and novv must come near his Seat.

Iob 41. 25.

Heb. 11. 21

Isai. 6. 5.

Iob 42. 4.

Dan. 10. 8.

Nothing so composes the soul to this amazing change of condition and converse, as long continued Treaties vwith God through Christ: vhen though men change their place, they do not change their company: Others, vhen this great *light strikes them*, are in the very terrors of the shadow of Death, and shaken out of their place, out of all the security, and quiet sensuality they lived in.

Iob 24. 17

Iob 18. 18

Let us novv take the estimate or avail of these things to true Repentance, and vve shall find, vhen the soul lyes thus uncovered to the things of Eternity, it hath natural reasons for all, it may seem to do like return to God; and so that all argue nothing of the true Grace of God; but if a man vv ere again in his

former state he would be the very same he was; for first, as one thing strikes upon another with a natural effect, Light upon the eye, Sound upon the ear, so eternal things upon the immortal spirit, when there is nothing between to intercept the stroke. Further, when *the lust of the Flesh, the lust of the Eye, and the pride of Life* are as a Scene removed, and a Play at an end; and instead of them another World drawing near, just as men defeated in all their attempts for riches, and honours, and beaten of from them to a private life, call all these things cheats; not out of true reason, but because they cannot reach them: on the other side they praise retirement and a Cloyster, not that they like it, but because they must live so, which begets some kind of contentedness so to live. Thus and no otherwise do many Dying men call all this World vanity, and profess an high esteem for all things pertaining to to that to come:

3. Cause. There is yet a more pressing Account of the most notable motions that were ever found in any of their Repentances, viz. The awakenings of Conscience usual at this time, because of the sense of a Judgment: while common experience tells men, *Heb. 9. 27. is appointed to all men once to dy*, and sinking nature gives notice, This is the time: Conscience lifts up to the next thing. *After that the judgment.*

Now no man sees judgment, a judgment omniscient, omnipresent, eternal without great shakes of Soul, especially that hath done nothing seriously to agree with the adversary in the way. Conscience then rising up with the Awe of a Tribunal upon it stirs up all the powers to fly from the wrath that is to

to come, by desires of pardon, and resolutions of Amendment. The very hearing of Judgment made such a one as *Felix tremble*. When Judgment seems to us, at the other end of Heaven, all is quiet; but when Death brings us to the very seat of it, How loud may be the cries for mercy? The bewailing the former evils of Life? Now men pour out their complaints for the want of God, the misimprovement of former time: Now they make large offers of a strict and severe mortification, and devotion to Religion. Now they would give *the thousand Rams, the ten thousand Rivers of Oyl, their first born for their transgression, the fruit of their Body for the sin of their Soul*. And yet all but the eye opened to see the flaming sword of Justice, that makes even a *Balaam* wish to dye the death of the Righteous, and to have a Latter end Sober, Just, Religious. A.C. 24. 25.
Mic. 6. 6, 7.
Num. 22.
Is. 62. 3.
10.

The very suspicion of a Judgment inclines men thus far universally almost, that hardly any choose to die in a Rant, in a madness; but had rather by virtue, and Religion be consigned over to another World; and have their eyes closed by Mercy, and Grace in Christ: They would see the Salvation of God, and so depart in Peace.

But it may be objected: Seeing these Motions are granted to rise from true conviction, and not to be dissimulation, or counterfeited pretence, why may not they have the worth of true Repentance? Object.

To answer this: Let us consider pure conviction, and inlightened apprehension, and the affections begotten of them, are no argument of true Goodness; where the light hath not a benign, and free operation upon the Judgment, an allurements upon the Will. Answ.

Will, an indearment upon the Affections; to turn them to a full delight, and satisfaction in God and holiness, & to a dislike and abhorrence of sin. For else, the Devils, *who believe and tremble*, must be thought Converts. For who have clearer sight of things than they? *Balaam*, whose eyes were opened, and spoke so great things of God, and his people, must be concluded a Good man. *Esau* and *Judas* who had so sad apprehensions of Sin, and their loss by it, must be affirmed to be Penitents. *Nebucadnezar's* and *Darius* his acknowledgments of God must be taken for true Grace. *Herod* his hearing *John Baptist* gladly. *Felix* his trembling at *Paul's* Discourse, may be thought evidences of true Repentance.

Obj. 2. But Secondly it may be supposed, because these very convictions and affections are not universal; but we see multitudes go out of the World without them, carrying little better than a decent and civil Respect to Religion, that therefore there is something of God, something Heroique in them, that have them.

Ans. 2. This indeed may be no other, than the wise and good Government of God over the World; whereby he takes care, there should be testimonies of himself, and the goodness of his ways: that Atheism, and wickedness may not carry it, as if all were their own, as if there were an unexceptionable concurrence on their side against God and Holiness. For as he receives witness from the constant, gracious and religious lives of good men, so he constrains some of them, that have lived contrary to him all their lives, to give him glory at last, for the good of others, though without saving benefit to themselves. Which he may justly do, and without any injury to them: Seeing all the

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the service, every creature can do to him, is infinitely due, he may make use of that which is his own, so far as he pleases. And because, *the word God puts in their mouths*, is not their own, not arising out of the *good treasure of their Hearts* (as appears in *Balaam*) therefore their everlasting condition is not determined by it, but by the constant course of their former Life, the true image of their Hearts, as we see in the same *Balaam*, who after died by the *Israelites* hand, whose greatness he had prophesied. Yet I will not deny, but they may have their reward in mitigation of punishment for any service done to God. Num. 3. 5
Mat. 12. 35
Num. 31. 8

If God did not interpose thus sometimes, he might seem wanting in something that concerned him, at least as a gracious Ruler of the World. He therefore over-rules some, who have lived so, as to make a constant Argument against him, and a future state (so far as wickedness could do it) to retract the whole course of their Life, and give their Vote, for what they had so long withstood.

I will yet further add another cause of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, that sometimes falls out to have a most powerful influence, and yet the Repentance that springs from it, is very unsafe to confide in.

Dying men are oft under the Play and force of other mens reason and Religion. For it is a general, and necessary Charity of men affected to Religion themselves, to offer the sense of it to others, in a time when they think it likely to be accepted, and so infinitely necessary; which practice however needful, and most commendable in it self, yet by accident may have raised higher the opinion of a *Death-Bed Repentance*, and is often the occasion of great Error in the thing it self. 4. Cause

For

For suppose a man followed with sound and affectionate persuasions, to do all that may be done for his Soul in this exigent; how conceivable is it, that man may be so far wrought-upon, as to entertain a present sense of Religion, and yet have no true Life, no life that arises from a true intimate Principle. But as those Bodies of Aire taken, and moved by Angels seem to perform the functions of living bodies, yet do but seem to do so. for they have no principle of life natural to them; but as soon, as they are forsaken by the Spirits that made use of them, they fly abroad, and disperse themselves. Thus that general sense of Conscience, that lies scattered through the Soul, and unable for action, being gathered together and united by good and holy applications, and acted thereby, may have force so long, as that union continues; but that discourse that holds it together ceasing, it immediately falls asunder, and loses its efficacy.

The stone that receives motion from the Hand, that throwes it, goes on whilst that motion lasts, when that is spent, it falls to the ground: so the force of exhortation ceases too often, when he that gives it, leaves those to whom it was given.

The instrument to which the Musicians hand gives tune and voice lies dead when he deserts it: Mans soul is made by God capable of religious tune and motion, and while a skilful hand playes upon it, it may give that sound very distinctly, and yet have no Life in it self.

The striking of Conscience makes the Sparkes fly out, yea and sometime kindle in a flame, and yet it presently dies. because not supplied with a continual Oyl to feed it.

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The mind of oneman is very apt to receive impressions from another, we see what passions and motions are raised by an eloquent Speaker; how the understanding is carried captive, while the Orator works upon it: and yet all the affection thus blown up falls flat again, when the breath that swell'd it lies still, and is apt to be carried the contrary way by cross persuasions equally insinuated.

How much more may this be in religious things; Conscience being so easily stir'd by such applications, as we see in *Felix*, though it is as easily becalmed, when sinful lusts through the efficacy of temptation are loud and high.

And all this is certainly much easilier done near Death, when men are so soft, that they are apt to take any stamp, so melting, as to be gathered into any mould.

It is possible for one mans spirit to carry another for some considerable space of time, as we see in *Teboidas* influence upon *Ioash*, who was not yet all that 2 Kin. 12. 2 time possessed with the things themselves, whereunto he was directed.

But true Repentance is a frame set up by the spirit of God in the Heart, subsisting by that spirit upon it self, and makes use only of all Helps subordinated to it, by the wisdom of that Spirit; but doth not live from that Help, but from it self through that Spirit, its supreme Life.

To draw these things therefore to a sum, It will appear, after all these causes have done; what they can, these great Errors following are generally found, and always to be suspected in a *Death-Bed Repentance*.

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1. In

Of a Death-Bed Repentance.

1. In a *Death-Bed Repentance*, There is only a Judgment made of the case of Eternity, considered by it self, and without a counterpoise: The excellency of God and eternal things are minded, as they stand out of the aire of Temptation. Now though this be a good opportunity for the first consideration, yet that consideration must grow so strong, as to retain the same sense, in the midst of all pretences from the World and Satban. Else in the time of Temptation this Repentance falls away. *m* "For there may be many true apprehensions, which may make deep impression, not only in the Brain and Phancy, but upon our Affections, whilest these are calm, and unprovok'd, and yet both the apprehension and impression quickly vanish upon the starting, or provocation of contrary Fancies or Affections."

*m Dr.
Jackson.
Book 10.
Chap. 23:
6th. 3.*

When the Blood cools in the Veins, and the spirits are ready to stand still, when a man is no longer to live in the world, *the season of the pleasures of Sin is over*, then to cast out his lusts, *What excellent thing does he?* *Mat. 5. 46.* *does not even nature, whether he will or no, the same?* True Repentance encounters temptation, and resists unto blood; when those pleasures of Sin are at the height, and the tide of corruption from within swells most. *As Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season*, although they were in their growing, and ascending morning. Repentance will not worship that Sun in the East. It is a very small thing to despise it in the West, and just a setting, to choose Religion when there is nothing to vye with it.

Heb. 11. 25

2. It is not a consideration of heavenly things in their true worth, but only as recommended by the present

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present necessity. For who would not die the Death of the Righteous? And have his latter end like his? Every man at that time would be glad to find, he hath lived well: and he that hath lived worst, except he be outrageous in prophaneness, will wish, he had lived better. Eternity at hand gives value to all Holiness, and sense of God, in spite of the World's, and lessens all things else to a *nothing*, and *less than nothing*; imprints a ghastliness and horror upon all wickedness and sensuality. *The thirty pieces are nothing worth*, and the *innocent blood above all value*, when men suffer in the agonies of Conscience, and fears of the approaching Judge. *A house full of Silver and Gold* will not buy a man to resist God, when indeed he appears to him, *when the terrible Majesty opens it self*, what is so precious, that men *will not sling to the Bats and Moles*? When the breath is going out of the nostrils, how precious is Repentance. Faith, a pardon in Christ, a happy Eternity? To those, who have heretofore slighted them, as the off-scouring of all things.

Mat. 27. 3.

Nu. 22. 28

Isa. 2. 10.

But these things are always so rich, *Wisdom is always so precious*, that it disdains to borrow esteem from a minute of extremity: and therefore it most often falls out, that those who would none of its counsel, but despised all its reproofe, when they come to seek it early, cannot find it, but it laughs at their calamity, as men laugh at the unhappiness of Fools, that would not be corrected in their folly, till their misery confute their confidence.

3. From hence it followes, That this Repentance is a choice, when there is no other choice; if a man loved his sins, or the world never so passionately, he

must leave them; if he disliked God, and his Holiness, and an everlasting abode with him, to the utmost; yet he is even forced upon them, or dashed upon an eternal misery, and unhappiness; which it is impossible to choose: and therefore though he would not choose the holy ways of God, if he might still enjoy former vanity, yet that being out of his reach and way, he must take what is to be had. The sense therefore is no more than this, All these things

*n Quale
bonum hoc
est, quod
melius est
pena, quod
non potest
videri bo-
num, nisi
perisimo.*

*compara-
tumus ideo
bonum sic
respicere,
quia deus
vult est
ardere. Cæ.*

*verum si
per mali
collationem
cogitur bo-
num dici,
non tam
bonum est,*

*quam genus
mali infiri-
oris, quod
altiori
malo obscu-
ratum ad
nomen boni*

*impellitur.
Tertul. De
Momo.
gemis.
chap. 3.*

are good, when a man is just a Dying; but while he lives, and can have the world, they are troublesome and unprofitable; Death makes them good, upon this account only, because else there would be something worse, and there can no longer be any thing better. A man is now willing to offer a Life he hath not to give, but Eternal life is not worth any part of that life he thinks in his power to do any thing else with. Let us then observe at what rate it is set, for to use *Tertullian's* words in another case, we may thus reason. "What a mean sort of good is this, that only exceeds punishment, which needs the worst of states for a Foil to itself, that it may be thought Good? It is good to repent, and be saved, because who can dwell with everlasting burnings? But if it must purchase the reputation of being Good from Evil, it is not so much a Good, as a lover de- grees of Evil; which while the greater evil eclipses it is compelled as it were to accept the name of a good, being driven upon the confines of goodness by the violence of greater evil.

4. This Repentance is not the Free, but inflayed Judgment and Choice of the Soul, as men cast out Goods in a Storm, and receive a power to rule over them,

them, that they cannot endure, but that it is too strong for them. Men are afraid what God will do to them, therefore they submit. His enemies in heart are found liars to him, they flatter him with their mouth, as *Julian* oppressed by the Almightyness of Christ, is storied to have cried out, *Vicisti Galilae*, Thou hast overcome me, Galilean. Thus they are overcome by Death, and the apprehension of Judgment. In the sight and view of the danger men resolve to part with their sins. Let but that remove, they call for their sins again, as Mariners wish for their goods after the Storm. They throw up their lusts in their sickness, but drink them in when their trouble is past, as the Dog returns to his vomit. In all this there is nothing of the love of God. 2 Pet. 2. 12.

5: In this Repentance, the Soul of it is generally a pittiful mean Self-love, even the meanest kind imaginable, wherein a man considers himself as a Creature in being, and likely, or at least possible to be for ever; without any apprehension of himself, as a rational creature made for God, & the enjoyment of him, in conforming with whom his happiness consists, and in the resting for ever in his love. Of this part he hath no distinct apprehension, only he would be happy though he knows not what it is, or rather he would not be miserable; yet even that he truly understands not. But as the Jews said to Christ, when he spake to them of the Bread of Life, *Lord evermore give us this bread*; and yet were scandalized at his explanation of himself to be that Bread, so far as to leave him. And the Pharisees hearing of the Vineyard to be let out to other Husband-men, and the Judgment upon themselves to be executed, Cried out, *God forbid*, yet run on

John 6. 14.

Luk 20. 16.

in

in the sin, that brought it upon them.

This little point of Self-love into which all is crowded is ennobled with no sight of the excellency of the things themselves, or a due estimation of them, as the true pleasure, and joy of an immortal spirit.

This is not that allowable love of a mans self, which incircles it self within the love of God, as the lesser Circle is comprehended by the greater, but this either leaves out that love wholly, or debases it to basest self.

Let us now compare both sides together, and see how much true Repentance differs from that, which is always to be feared, lest it should be the height of the Death-Bed: and of that which hath been spoken, this is the sum,

True Repentance is the most free election of the Soul inabled by the Grace of God, upon a clear, and just dictate of the Judgment, attended with sincerest affection, to give up it self to God through Jesus Christ, and when it is most it self, not under any irregular fear or constraint, and (at least would be the same) in a time, when it hath all the probability that can be to lay hold upon things present.

The other Repentance arises from a Soul all troubled, and discomposed with the throwes of Death, the fears of Hell, the doubts what will become of it in another World, the uproars of a guilty Conscience; when it supposes it self necessarily at the full stop of its former courses, by being cut off from longer Life, in the midst of all which arise vehement resolutions to turn from sin to God, and possibly with many fair apparencies, but without opportunity to give prooffe of themselves.

Let

Let any one Judge between these two Repentances, and accordingly even counsel himself concerning them.

Yet I must acknowledg this Discourse subject to these following limitations.

1. That the Arguments I have insisted upon prevail not only against a *Death-Bed Repentance*, but against all Repentances, that have no higher spirit to move them, than what I have now represented; from hence therefore we may take the trial of our Repentance in general, for though a Death-Bed is most subject to these mistakes, yet whatever Repentance falls under them, is by reason of them invalid; and the later any Repentance is, or the more it is occasioned by any extremity, which it doth not out-live, the more subject it is to them.

2. What I have said is not at all to be understood of the perfecting and consummating Repentance, by higher and fuller acts towards God at Death, though enforced by the present circumstances of the Case. For true Repentance running through the whole life takes advantage of every thing, much more of so considerable an opportunity to unite all our strength for God, as a Death-Bed brings with it. All that hath been spoken is designed against trusting to the *Extremity* of a Dying Repentance, just then begun.

3. Have before resolved upon that tenderest Doctrine, that it is possible among all the unhappy circumstances of a Dying-Bed, there yet may be this true Act of the Understanding, Will, and Affections turning to God; and if there be this, it would be the same and alike, however these circumstances alter, and then it excels those temporary amendments undertaken.

undertaken in the freest times of life. But because it is but possible and so almost impossible, so unhappy a Case, (as not to have repented till just we dye) should fall out so happily, the intention of this Discourse stands good notwithstanding.

4. I acknowledge, the choice of the Soul can never be so free, but it must be subject to infinitely the most worthy and preponderating considerations: of the love and goodness of God, the Redemption of Christ, the greatness of eternal Happiness most inclining on one side; of the fear & terror of the Lord, the loss of a Soul, everlasting perdition, most perswasive on the other side, so that if a man cannot be free in his choice of Religion, except he choose it without the force of any such consideration, he can never be at all free, for these are on all sides of him: And further, there is always the supreme motion of the Grace of God, which does not lessen, but steer and exalt the freedom of the Will towards God.

The difference then between true and false Repentance in this particular is the same, that is between just and rational consideration of all the motives of Hope and Fear: And the hurry of them moving us not intellectually, but as a Tempest, or with the force of a meer Engine. 2. Between the highest reasons carrying the chiefest force, and leading along with them the lower ones, and the lower doing all without the higher, for want of which they are Sensual or Hellish. 3. Between the government of meer Providence, and of the Spirit of God. 4. Between the Repentance of *Cain, Esau, Saul, Judas*, and the Repentance of *David, Manassah, Peter*, and *Paul*.

5. I acknowledg the first preparations of the Soul by God for himself, may be with a great deal of noise and confusion; *Clouds and Darkness are the Dust of his Feet, Storms go before him to prepare his way*, while these last; there cannot be a serene calm Act of the Soul, and he that doth not live till he *hear that still voice*, in which God is, is in great danger of being lost in the Storm. But if out of this darkness, and confusion, a holy and gracious settlement proceed; it is not the worse for being so introduced, but is agreeable with the usual method of God.

The fourth Head I propos'd, is to weigh the Repentance of the crucified Malefactor against our common *Death-Bed Repentances*, which duly performed will be of great force against presumption, rather than minister it any confidence.

For we shall find so much gathered together, and pressed down into it, that as Jewels have their riches in a little room, so his short life of penitency had an age of Repentance in it.

It is so compos'd of extraordinaries, that it can give very little encouragement in ordinary Cases, except just thus much; that Repentance at Death is no absolute impossibility.

1. Let us observe how his Repentance look'd to the several parts of repentance; for though it had but little time in this World to breathe in, yet with extraordinary diligence, it was busie in all the great, and most concerning points. Yet I account this of the least remark in the History of his Repentance, because it is easily imitable, That in which it excelled was the Evidences of sincerity it carried.

1. Yet take notice of his sense and acknowledg-

G

ment

*Magnum
est pœni-
sentia sig-
num in pa-
na sua ac-
quiescere.
Grot. in
locum.*

ment of Sin, which was not only a confession of words, but of his very soul, for liberating things in a moment, he pronounced himself worthy of the condemnation, and punishment he endured. I confess this is not so infrequent in those, who have forfeited their lives to Justice, but how oft is it rather a formality, than the inward sense of the mind decently affected? and possibly if we look upon the out-side of things, we can find no great difference between him and others. Yet it is a necessary part of Repentance; *The sacrifice of God is a broken and contrite heart.*

Ph. 51. 17

2. In his Repentance lay a lively Faith in Christ, first resting upon the principle, and truth of the thing; That *Christ was a just person*, that he had a Kingdom, and then a particular application to him for mercy, *Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.*

a. Tim. 1 10

3. A quick sense of Eternity supplied vigor to his Repentance, an evident sight of something beyond this World. For what more excites the soul, and shews it the necessity of a gracious change, than an everlasting condition appearing to it? To this end hath *Jesus Christ brought life and immortality to light*, of which this Penitent made a very full confession; *Lord remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.* He saw a Kingdom beyond the Cross and Death.

4. An earnest desire to promote and propagate a sense of God into the Hearts of others was the immediate fruit of this malefactor's Repentance. He admonishes the impenitent Thief on the other side, *Dost thou not fear God?* He had such a reverence of God, that he expostulates the want of it in the other

as monstrous and horrid. His design was also exceeding compassionate, as well as pious: For it was an endeavour full of charity, desirous his guilty fellow-sufferer should be brought into the same condition with himself. We want much of the compassion due to the Souls of others, because we are so insensible of the misery of our own; and taste but little of the sweetness of Reconciliation and Grace: But when we drink largely out of these Fountains, we derive the Streams upon others, that have flowed upon our selves.

All these things were evidently much to the purpose, if we look upon themselves; Yet were there nothing more extraordinary in them, we might doubt whether they were any more than the good Mood, into which principles of Conscience excited by the unhappiness of his condition might put him: Let us then consider the evidence, that all this was truly supernatural; for I account it no injury to so memorable a Repentance to suppose, that as great and fair an outside may have fail'd of Paradise, into which he entred. But,

2. The acknowledgment he made of Christ gives testimony to him in two things.

1. That it was made, when Christ was under all the infamy, and misery of a shameful, and painful Death, and nothing to make such a greatness, as he ascribed to him probable. Amongst that in general Language speak honourably of Christ, professions of him are cheap, and prove nothing: But if one bred in Turcisme, or Judaisme, should confess him, it would argue much more; yet not so much as in this malefactor, who saw him in so despicable a

state: whereas now so great a part of the World
 Acts 1.9. acknowledging him, hath carried him up to Heaven,
 as it were in that Cloud, wherein he ascended long ago,
 and hid the reproach of his Cross in so high a Glory.

To confess him in his worst estate, and before
 any thing of the consequence was known, vvas very
 great: a Christ was revealed to him, not by Flesh and Blood;
 Mat. 16. 17. a *Extrema*
 fides, sed
 non mini-
 ma. Aug.
 serm. 122.
 de Temp.
 b Ad rem
 credendam
 a sensibus
 remotissi-
 mam exci-
 satus est.
 Grot.
 but by God himself. Such an Heroickness is indeed
 necessary to assure a *Death-Bed Repentance*, which had
 need be as great, as it is late, vvhhen men do not live
 to see the ordinary fruits of it.

He that could see Christ, and his Glory, through
 so dark a vail, had his Eyes annointed with that Eye-salve;
 Christ speaks of b.

We find the Apostles, vvhohad seen his miracles;
 heard his divine Discourses, made long acknowv-
 ledgments of him, vvhere fearfully shaken by this
 assault of the power of darkness upon him; even to a de-
 spair, that he vvas the Christ. But vvhile they vvhere
 in a swoon of Faith, this Faith with Christ triumphed
 oyer Principalities and Powvers, even on the Cross.

We looking upon the things of Christianity in the
 common Profession of the Nation, It is a hard thing
 for us to see them othervvise, than that cast them,
 as it vvould be for those, that have knowvn nothing
 but the Religion of *Mahomet*, Paganism, or the
 Jewvish Synagogue, to take up upon the sudden the
 Doctrine of Christianity against their ovvn.

We believing not vvith our ovvn Faith, but
 vulgar opinion, easily make a confession of Christ;
 yet oftentimes the povver and saving effect of it is
 far from us, as from those that are strangers to him:
 sometimes they that come from the East, and from
 the

Quando
 passus est
 omnes disci-
 puli desce-
 peraverunt
 quod ipse es-
 set Christus.
 A latrone
 visus sunt
 Apostoli
 qui tunc
 credidit
 quando il-
 li desce-
 runt. Aug.
 in Psal. 68

the West, sit down in the Kingdom of God, when the Children of the Kingdom are thrust out.

The acknowledgment of Christ in those times, was a much fairer evidence, than it can be now; yet without inward Grace was nothing then, much less must it needs be to us, who have it made ready to our hands by Education and common consent in it, we must therefore the more narrowly observe, what Characters the truth of Christ imprints upon our Hearts.

2. This acknowledgment was made without any manner of inducement, or temptation to it, from outward advantages, it could possibly afford; but rather an increase of shame and scorn was to be expected from it; and that if it were possible, he should suffer the second time for such a confession, and become of a malefactor a Martyr. Nay further, there was no Dictate of natural conscience, that could incline him to it, for that runs not into the confession of Christ, nor is any way quieted concerning former sins through such a confession; but eyes God only, and moral righteousness: Lastly no general Tradition prompted him to it, the Jews at that time condemning him. But in us, all applications to Christ are securing our selves in the common Barque, and keeps us from being censured, as prophane, and irreligious persons. For to dye without any address to Christ, is accounted very ungodly, and senseless of a future state; but to deny him, monstrous and desperate. Further Christianity is incorporated with our natural Principles, so that they never move, or heave themselves in us, but that also rises with them.

*Tanto
namque
poudere
appensum
est, tan-
tumque
valuit a-
pud eum,
qui novit
hac appen-
dere, quod
confessus
est Domi-
num cruci-
fixum,
quantum
si fuisset
pro Domi-
no crucifix-
us. Augu-
st. De Ani-
ma & ejus
Origine.*

Now it is of great importance in the tryal of Sincerity, upon what grounds and motives we do, what we do; and the more we can clear it from inferiour springs, the more certainly it is *Grace descending from above, and resting upon us.*

1am. 1. 17.

Every one therefore that would justifie a *Death-Bed Repentance*, must exceed all common sorts of Repentance, else he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Nay he must do something, that in the little space of time, he hath to do it in, must equal a course of amendment of Life, must be as great in him, as this Repentance of the Thief.

And do but think, if our Faith were to cut those waves, his was to pass, to row against such a stream, ~~to remove such mountains~~, among how many thousands there would be found a Faith to do it, we should immediately be stopp'd, and sunk, and cast away, and lost. Yet such are they we are to pass through into eternal life, though of different circumstances from his.

But after all I will allow it possible, there might be a secret flaw in this whole penitent deportment, we now insist upon; and that it far'd with him as with some among us, who after a wicked and debauched Life fly to the Sanctuary of the Romish Religion (as *1 Ki. 2. 28. Joab to the horns of the Altar.*) To reconciliation wherewith Hopelesness of any good from that they have so long sinned against, and natural superstition hurry them. So this person hearing a great Fame of Christ, and observing his pretence high, might lay hold upon him in a desperate Case, if peradventure any thing of good might follow on it: It being very incidental to the nature of man to cast himself upon
Religi.

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Religion, when all else fails, and upon one new to him, when he hath offended against the old one, beyond hope of pardon; whence men generally receive this recompence, that Conscience is put into amaze, having nothing at present to say against it.

And had this been the top of his Case, that it had been thus, could it have been saving? Nay that it might possibly have been thus, though indeed it had been otherwise; yet this very liableness to such a mistake had unspeakably abated the rational security, and safety of his condition: so that there had remained good cause for Conscience to have mistrusted which way his condition would have fallen to Eternity.

The Third thing therefore, that gave him, and gives to all Ages undoubted Testimony of the truth of his conversion, is the immediate attestation to that truth, and sincerity of it, *This day shall I show be with me in Paradise.* Now that Repentance which enters into Heaven, that passes into Paradise, not hinder'd by those flaming Cherubs of divine Truth, that which is within the Day; before the Master of the House is risen up and hath shut it to, that is true Repentance and prosperous, and successful, how late soever. But to know that it is true, when it is so late, needs a voice from Heaven, or something proportional to it, to verify it, as is after to be urged.

The last thing I take notice of in this Repentance is the unparallelable circumstance of time, wherein it was accepted.

1. It was in the time of a publick Act of mercy to the World, God was in love to mankind giving his only begotten Son. Christ was giving himself at this time. Therefore that there should be an Instance and Monument

ment of this mercy, seem'd condecant to so great and solemn a time.

2. This Penitent stood close to that Sacrifice, that was offering it self up to God: He stood within the Saviour, the Odor, the Incense of it. That Sacrifice, *that purchases men from a vain conversation*, that draws down all the Blessings of Salvation; that therefore the force of it should reach so near it self, is not strange: I know no nearness of place signifies at all. How many saw his Miracles, heard him Preach, look'd upon him Dying, without benefit; yet was his presence also, as he pleased, full of Divine effects.

That therefore there should be an experiment of so great a Balsom, just as it was preparing, was most suitable.

3. It was in the time, that *Christ was triumphing over Principalities, and Powers, and making a shew of them openly upon the very Cross*. That he should bear off in the Field the prey taken out of the mouth of the proud Foe, was very agreeable to the expectation to great a Conqueror raises. *Colos. 2. 15.*

But whoever considers the Thief on the other side not converted, or saved, will find cause to observe: The Salvation of Christ doth not sweep the World, but is rarer, vouchsafed, than we think: That a man may dye without going to Heaven; That the mercy of the Gospel is most arbitrary and sovereign, in choosing and leaving; That it depends not on humane expectation, or any superstitious phancies; that have been raised about the Cross of Christ: for so much appears by one only taken here, the other left, though upon the Cross together with Christ, and near him in the great and mediatory Acts: who that considers will

*Uicem
versam
reddidit
Christus
diabolo,
quem ad-
mum diabo-
lus depra-
vando ho-
minem ab-
sulerat de
Paradiso.
sic Christus
latronem
confitemen-
ter erueret de
inferno:
Ille de in-
ferno pra-
sumens
decepit.
Iste pen-
itentem de
parali
ligno rede-
mis. Augu-
Serm. 123.
De Temp.*

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will not tremble to think of one left in his sins, falling down into Hell from such a Heaven as Christ in his great Act of Redemption.

And although it may be truly said, It was the fault, and negligence, and obstinacy of the unconverted malefactor, that he did not use aright the Grace offered, or the Light vouchsafed him; yet it doth not alleviate the danger, for it still remains very uncertain to whom God will give a Heart to use opportunities aright, though they have them from God with an equal liberality, as those that do so improve them.

But indeed, the supremacy of Grace is here very much acknowledged by all, that a ray of the Divinity of Christ with infinite kindness smote his Soul. Nova & insolita quædam divina virtus efficaciam, in exemplum omnibus fecit mirabile, &c. infer nothing from that more improbable, and unnecessary increase. Some Interpreters give the Miracle, That he was converted after he had joyned with the other malefactor in reproaching Christ. Grot. In locum.

Upon the whole then of this example, let men that would be befriended by a *Dying Repentance*, examine whether these things found in this Example are like to meet upon them. I will not say, till there be a time, a fulness of time, wherein Christ shall again dye for sinners, such a Repentance is not to be expected; but I may safely say, he that in the observation of this example trusts himself to a *Dying Repentance* should strangle his presumption with this Interrogation, will there ever be such a conjunction, as was here, again, while the World endures? Vid. Grot. In locum. a Hieron. In locum. Beneficium multis modis insignitum, & non tantum in hac occasione, sed in consequentiis exempli.

I come now to the last Head of down right Arguments against committing our Eternal state to a *Death-Bed Repentance*.

1. It is against all the prudence and providence of a

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man seeing no man knows what kind of Death he shall dye; whether it will afford him the possibilities of repenting, how many dye suddenly, and in so short a Breath, that they have not time to desire mercy in general; how many of Apoplexies seizing upon the very Top of sense at first; many by Phrenesies have no rational motion of themselves, innumerable Accidents (and oftentimes made dreadful by the wickedness wherewith they have been accompanied) have snatch'd away men in a moment. *Such are taken away living and in his wrath before the Pots can feel the storns*, before ever those hasty flames of motion towards God blown up for such an extremity can be raised. Such are taken in the very manner without so much time as to put off the Every-Day Habit of Sin, *like those that were carried out dead in their Coats*.

Ps. 58.9

Lev. 10.3

And though from the ordinary manner of Dying, we may hope for the warning ordinarily given; yet we see others surprized, who have had the same reasons of Hope with our selves; We cannot then without madness trust our selves to accident, *or boast our selves as to morrow*, of which we know not what is within it, seeing the future is wholly concealed from us. *They that make a Covenant with death, and are at an agreement with Hell meet with nothing but perfidiousness, when the overflowing scourge approaches them, & the storm of Hail rends their refuge of lies*. If we were provided against all, but one single accident, even that may fall upon us with the ruin, that all the rest could bring.

Psa. 37.1

Ish. 28.18

3c.

Let a man examine, whether he can chooſe his Death, and design the circumstances of it; and place every thing, just as he would have it; and thereby afford himself this season he thinks necessary for such

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a purpose; But vvho is so foolish as to undertake this. He that builds upon ground, that is none of his ovvn, is like to have all his Frame overturned at the pleasure of another; God derides this Folly, vvho hath all things in his ovvn hand, and disposes them vvithout our knowvledg. *Go too ye that say, To day or to morrow* Iam. 4. 13. *we will go to such a place, and buy, and sell, and get gain:* Psa. 104. 1. But oh miserable is he that thinks, as God, *to lay the beams of his Chambers,* that he builds for his eternal rest *in the Waters*, the flowing ineertainty of future time; vvhere he hath nothing to do, and oversees the proper Rest appointed him by God, seeing both his presumption, and his prophane negligence are likely to be punished together. For indeed he that is vvickedly prodigal, of vvhat God affords him, as his, and is bold to entrench upon the future, vvwhich is Gods, vvhen he comes to it, finds it full and possessed already, vvith vvhat God hath provided for it; so there is no room for his project, but he perishes for ever in the disappointment.

2. It is against our Duty, and all the Obligations, that lye on us. For it is as if a man should say to God, I know it is my Duty, and the end of my Life, and the providence thou exercisest towards me, that I should now serve thee, and give up my self to thee; But I beg of thee, that while I live, I may live in my lusts & sensualities, and vvhen I am to dye and go out of the world, and shall have no more time and leisure for any thing else, I shall then have nothing to do, but to look towards thee, & beseech thy favour, and leave my sins; I desire thee therefore to stay for my Repentance till then, and vvhen I can no longer enjoy the World, then to grant me a Kingdom vvith thy self, and the fruition

*Odibile est
apud De-
um, quando
homo sub
fiducia pe-
nitentie in
sine fustem
reservatam
liberius
peccat.
August.
Serm. 120.*

of thy own happiness: for though I shall dishonour thee in the tract of my Life, yet I will retract it all in a breath. How horribly contemptuous of God doth this appear, how affronting and blasphemous? and yet this is the very sense of deferring Repentance, till Death.

This is the greatest immorality and irreligion, for it destroyes the reason of our Being on earth, which *is to serve our generation, or the course of our Life according to the will of God, to glorifie in here on Earth.* It *John 17. 4.* destroyes the service, yet flies upon the reward; as if God were bound to make men happy, because he had made them, and that he had made them, first to take the delights he most abhorres, to dishonour him, by deforming his workmanship, & violating his Laws, & the good order he hath set in the World, and yet after all because he had made them, to give them a blessedness so insuperably great, that he could find no greater, and by no means to hurt or punish them for sin; though all the Justice, that ever was known to man; requires punishment of offenders, as much as the reward of Desert: else all Government would be lost.

Thus therefore to imagine of God is to meke him down, with those great Attributes of Justice and wisdom, into a foolish and unreasonable pity, and only for this end, that there may be a licentiousness in wickedness and impiety.

And seeing upon the same account, all the men in the World may adjourn their Love and Obedience to God, to their going out of it; It might come to pass, that this state should have been prepared only as a Stage for the vices and exorbitancies of men to have acted,

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acted themselves upon, and then they to have removed to Heaven, when as though these have large scope indeed now, as things are, yet their licentiousness is daily rebuked by the threats of the Gospel, by the holy conversations of those, that have left their sins by Repentance, and punished by an eternal Judgment hereafter.

But who that considers the infinite goodness and greatness of God, *that in his hand is our life, and breath, and all our ways*, can think it equal, that God should have only the faint and feeble services of a Death-Bed, for all the preservation and mercy vouchsafed through the course of our lives.

Or, who can think it consistent with his honour to give men Laws, that point upon the Government of themselves here, and that he should at so general a rate, as the necessity of mens manner of living requires, accept of such a commutation, or exchange for the obedience due to them, as a *Death-Bed Repentance*?

Or, least of all, who can believe? that Jesus Christ should come a Redeemer into the World, *a Redeemer* Tit. 2. 14. *from all iniquity, a purchaser from a vain conversation, that he might have a peculiar people zealous of good works; who should look for the great day, & his glorious appearance, by a patient expectation and continuance in well-doing;* Rom. 2. 7. to which he hath also tyed them by the most strict obligations, that created nature is capable of, and yet that this in a manner should be wholly frustrated, even in those supposed to be redeemed by him.

How shall such a man then be able to look God or Jesus Christ the Saviour in the face, that hath but just begun to acknowledge him by some weak devotions.

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to him, extorted even of necessity, and given the
 Mal. 1. 14. bulk of his time to sin, that hath sacrificed the male
 of his flock to lust, and even with impious design
 kept the corrupt thing for God,

3. If we truly understand the nature of Repen-
 tance, and that it is the gift and Grace of God. It is,

1. A great presumption upon that Grace, to think
 we can call it down from Heaven at our own need,
 who have offered so much injury to the motions of it,
 vouchsafed in the time of our life; we do not con-
 sider, that this Grace designs its own Glory, and
 teaches to live *Godly, righteously, soberly, now in this*
 Tit. 2. 13. *present world*, and therein to wait for the manifestation
 of everlasting glory, and thus we are *to seek for ho-*
 Rom. 2. 7. *nour, glory, and immortality.*

Now that they that have bidden defiance to this
 Grace so long, should bring it down from the Clouds
 in their dying moments, to convey them to Happi-
 nel, is to make so cheap of that infinitely precious
 goodness, that whoever aright considers the Case,
 must needs infinitely abhor the thoughts. Yet this is
 the necessity of such mens condition, that they must
 either think themselves worthy thus to beckon the
 Grace of God, or they must perish for ever. They
 enter then a contest of precedency and superiority
 with this Grace, and decide against it: That it is sic
 for that to stoop and humble, yea to prostitute it self,
 rather than they should be for ever miserable: yea
 rather than they should have been obliged to a holy
 Life.

2. It is for a man to desire God, to mistime his grace,
 for the season of it is the present offer in the Gospe^l.

2 Cor. 6. 2. *Now is the time accepted, now is the day of Salvation.* It

sto desire God to give him a Spring in Autumn, or Winter, when the time of the patience of God is over, to expect the Salvation of God. now God who hath with infinite wisdom and equality weighed out times and seasons, and made every *thing beautiful in its time*, doth not reverse his own appointments to serve the folly of man, who have not *known their times*, and the *things of their peace in their day*. Ecc. 1. 11. and 9. 12. Luk. 19. 42

For can it seem reasonable, that mountains should remove out of their places? and rocks wander from their situation? that man more unintelligent, *than the Snallow and Crane that observe their appointed times*, might not be insured by the evil times that fall suddenly upon them? He that trusts then to such a Repentance, doth, as it were, resolve to be saved by miracle, or else perish. Is. 8. 7. Ecc. 9. 12

3. Men do not consider the Jealousie of God, nor are afraid of his oath against them, that *harden their hearts and do not hear his voice to day*: so that some, who have trifled with the Grace of God, *seek him early and do not find him*. The Israelites that said, *Whether shall we go up, when they were commanded to go up, and possess the land*, when they would have gone up afterwards and fought for it, were rejected by God. So in Zechary, God gives account of that great judgment of their Captivity, concerning which though *Isaiah, Samuel and Job* had interceded, *he would not have heard*. As when I cried they would not hear, so it came to *pass that they cried, and I would not hear*. Heb. 3. 9. 10, 11. Deut. 1. 28. 29. 26. 7. 11, 12.

Many fail of the Grace of God that prophanelly sell their Birth-right for a transitory satisfaction, and find no place for their Repentance, or of Gods Repentance in favour towards them, though they seek it carefully, and with

with tears. While men are busie in fulfilling the corrupt desires of their sinful flesh, and make slight of the mercy, that so freely presents their souls, a silent decree passes against them; that though it makes no noise in their ears, yet seals them in blindness, and hardness, so that their souls are for ever closed therein: for who can open what is shut by so powerful and awful a Hand?

4. It is impossible to a man to dye with good composure of mind, that trusts to a dying Repentance; for let the Case be thus stated, That Repentance, which will not inable a man to a Holy Life, is not saving; suppose a man then in a dying sickness, making great acknowledgment of sin, full of resolutions of leaving sin, and this man recovering and performing nothing, but sliding back into the former vvretchedness of Life; this Repentance howver serious, and earnest it seemed, vvould not have saved him, if he had died; he had perished in his sins, and his false Repentance together: For that his Repentance vvvas truly inferiour to his sins, appears, in that as soon as ever that is over, vvwhich gave it a seeming advantage, his sins throw off that Repentance: but true Repentance alvvays overcomes, that Repentance therefore could not be true.

Rev. 2. 7.
&c.

And if Repentance be false and counterfeit, there is no amendment of it in Eternity; vvhen once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, there is no entrance: vvwhile the foolish Virgins too late understanding the error of oyle in their lamps only, and not in their vessels vvvent to correct it, by buying oyle, & ey were shut out and no knocking powerfull enough for their admission.

Luk 11. 25

Mar. 25. 3.
&c.

Yea though a man may seem to be well quieted, and comforted, and to have the testimony of the Spirit of God, yet all this may be but a delusion, and *Sathan in an Angel of light*; for though they that have truly this testimony, may be supposed to know it is that true spirit; yet they that have it not, may have something, they so strongly imagine to be it, that thereby they may be deceived. This testimony therefore must be proportionable to the assurance, this dying man had from Christ; else even a man that dies safe, must dye in such an unexpressible torment of mind, that it had been much better he had enjoyed no such seasons of sin, than only endure that. And who can presume so upon God, as to promise himself such a train of miracles to carry him not only to Heaven, but without those Agonies of horror that are like Hell, after so long impenitency.

2 Cor. 11
14.

Thus on all sides it is most necessary for every one to repent while he may behold the truth of his Repentance in the ordinary fruits of a holy Life; and see himself in all the circumstances of temptation, change of condition, varieties, which Life and the course of it carry along with it: For that is often by length of time cast up, and appears upon the surface, that lay concealed at the bottom, till such a concurrence of things gives it the advantage to rise.

I understand nothing that can be objected to this last Argument I have used to disable the confidence in such a Repentance, except this,

It may be supposed, the Repentance that is full of passionate and affectionate motions towards God, though amidst the fears of Death may be good, till it be blotted out by returns to sin, and therefore if it be,

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taken in the just time, while it is good; that is, if a man dies before it be reversed, it may serve the great purpose of eternity.

This Supposition I must confess hath a seeming countenance from that particular place, *Ezek. 33. 12. The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness.*

Mat. 11,

20. 21.

Mat. 7. 26;

But if the scope of Scripture discourse in general, or the very sense of morality be taken in the Case, no man may trust to great a weight here; For Christ looks upon the stony ground with the same Eye, while it receives the word with joy, as when by and by it is offended; and it was therefore truly no better at first than at last. *The House that is not founded upon the Rock*, is as ill founded in the calm, as in the storm, only the storm discovers what it was. Morality it self requires a better rooting of virtuous Habits, than that they should be set only in loose ground, thrown up by extremity of condition, and not in the soil it self.

That Repentance which will not bear the trial of time, will much less sustain the test of Eternity, wherein every thing that stands, must be solid and substantial. Things that suffer the loss of themselves, when they are tried by mans day will suddenly be consumed by the hotter beams of Gods.

1 Cor. 4. 1:

That hath need of goodnealing, that must undergo an eternity, and have all advantage of concordio, that must be laid up for ever; which the short moments of a Death-Bed without a miraculous assistance will not allow. The fruit of it generally like that

Mai. 28. 4,

Hasty-ripe, perishes while it is in the Hand, This Repentance

tance gives up the Ghost, as soon as it is born.

Now as for that place in *Ezekiel*, so much vexed with controversie, I do not think it convenient for me, to intangle a Discourse intended wholly for practice with the perplexities of it.

Only I am concerned to shew, that it doth not afford the favour supposed to this kind of Repentance. For first, We must not mistake *the day* it speaks of, as if it signified so strait a compass of time, as a day, but that season wherein either the righteous man waists and destroyes his righteousness; or a sinner overcomes his vicious customs and inclinations, neither of which are usually done on the sudden. Secondly, *the turning from wickedness* intended is certainly a sincere and impartial one, and not such as we have rendered this dying Repentance suspicious to be. Thirdly, it must be justified by a *walking in the Statutes and judgments of God, and doing that is right*; that is, by a continued Reformation, which will least agree to this Repentance, and therefore this place of Scripture will not protect this supposition, but rather damns it.

Having now in the foregoing Discourse, in a practical and perswasive way, endeavoured to engage men to a timely Repentance, by setting out the hazard of a late one: I have thought it yet necessary, to make the state of the whole Doctrine, as exact as I can, by considering whatever might with fair appearance of Scripture-reason call into question and scruple, what I have grounded my perswasions upon.

I will therefore, as a supplement to all I have said, first recollect what I have intended all along. And then

then cast all, I can possibly suppose against it, into *Objections* and *Answers*, that by closer attention to the Case it self, every one, that will be at the cost to consider it, may be convinced to the main end, *viz.* A present Religious Life.

1. First then I make it not the question, Whether a true Repentance, how late soever, be a Repentance to Salvation?
2. Nor Secondly, Whether God hath reserved it to the Prerogative of his Grace, to give a true Repentance at last?
3. Nor Thirdly, Whether a Repentance that is true and sincere, though but in the seeds, being surprized with a Death-Bed, may not then break out and shew it self more fully?
4. Nor lastly, Whether a man that hath the light of the Gospel brought to him, but just before his Dying condition, may not expect the Grace of God working with it then, even as in the freer times of Life?

All these I do with great confidence acknowledge, the substance of what I have said against a Death-bed Repentance, will be comprised in these following Assertions, which I restrain vvholly to men, that have lived under the light, and exhortations, and applications of the Word of God, vvith all usual Freedom; and yet have not begun sincerely to repent, till they come to dye.

The First is, That a *Death-bed Repentance* howv fair soever, it may appear, hath yet the greatest Doubt imaginable upon it, vvwhether it be true.

The Second, There is greatest reason of Fear, God vvill not give his grace to such a dying man, to repent.

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The third, That a Repentance at Death is not that *general Repentance*, the Scripture discourses of, makes promises of pardon upon, offers the assistances of the Spirit to, enjoynes the Duty of, with so many pressing commands. For that Repentance immediately to be begun is supposed to govern a following Life. It must therefore be an extraordinary, and miraculous Repentance if true.

Lastly, That it is therefore against all rules of Piety and Prudence, by mispending Life to cast ourselves upon the necessity of Repentance at Death.

This, I say, is the substance of what I have designed all along, & which I would now further clear, and vindicate from these following Objections.

Objection 1. Doth not the Parable of calling some Labourers into the Vineyard at the eleventh Hour, *Object. 1.*
imply; That God doth in ordinary convert some *Mat. 20.*
at the last Hour, as well as sooner? *v. 1. &c.*

Answer. The main scope of Parables is only argumentative, and so far as the scope of that Parable relates to this Case; It is no more, than what I acknowledg. That God gives eternal Life to true Repentance, if true, at last, even as to the first and earliest Repentance. The reward being to all of *Grace and not of Debt.* It is also to be considered, there remained an Hour of working, representing rather old Age, than a Death-Bed, if the colours of a Parable prove any thing, and so are rather against this Repentance, than for it.

In the *Second Objection*, I suppose men taking Sanctuary at infinite mercy and power in this manner. *Obj. 2.*

Although no thought of man can reach the mercy, that accepts or gives Repentance at the last: yet mercy

mercy being as much above our thoughts, as the Heaven above the Earth, what can we define concerning it? And though there are so many circumstances of impossibility, according to our measure of things; Yet the things that are impossible with men, with God are possible; for with God all things are possible: how can we then determine in this Case? *Can we by searching find out the Almighty in his Mercy and Power? Can we find him out to perfection? It is high as Heaven, what can we do? It is deeper than Hell, what can we know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.*

Answer. Now because in this *Objection*, the sinews of all hope and expectation from this late Repentance meet; I will endeavour to give the most punctual *Answer* to it. And though I know after all, that is, or can be said; men will not quit it. Yet I shall rest upon this *Answer*, as my last resolution of this Case; and by it raise the dissuasions from a trust in such a Repentance to the height, the greatness of the hazard appearing most fully from it.

In general therefore it hath been noted, The question is not whether God accepts a true Repentance, how late soever, but whether God will give a true repentance so late, and herein the question is not of the limits, the absolute limits of infinite mercy and power; But what limits it hath set to it self? and what seasons it hath limited to us? and whether according to these a *Death-Bed Repentance* be not almost, if not altogether an impossibility? I'll therefore lay down several degrees of impossibility, notwithstanding infinite mercy and power, that must necessarily abate the irregular confidence of such a repentance, and under

under one of them I shall be bold to place it.

1. The highest degree of impossibility is, of those things, that are utterly and absolutely *impossible with God*, because they are irreconcilable with his Nature, and such wherein if they were; *he must deny himself*, which he cannot do. For though there is nothing above God, not so much as any goodness, or righteousness abstracted from himself, that should give him Law; Yet he being himself that supreme goodness and righteousness, He is a Law to himself; His nature is his supreme and inviolable Law; And his Will stands alwayes even vvith his Nature; For his Will is himself reciprocal vvith his Nature; And all his Actions keep perfect correspondence vvith his Will. Upon this immutable reason *God cannot lye*, he cannot do any thing weak, or that argues imperfection: He cannot but be righteous in all his vvays, & holy in all his vvorks. Upon this reason also he cannot *he will not acquit the guilty*. He cannot *he will not save* or make happy men in their sins. God himself speaks this sense. *Ezek. 18. 31, 32. and c. 33. 11. As I live saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of him that dieth, why will ye dye? Turn your selves and live ye.* As if he should say, except ye turn, all my mercy can do you no good. For such a mercy vvould not be a mercy, but either a foolish softness, or loose indulgence to sin. Such a povver vvare not a povver, but an impotency, or turning all things to confusion. These therefore are as inconsistent vvith God, as Folly, Imperfection, Sin. The Gospel, the highest display of mercy rests upon this principle, being not a Salvation of men in sin, but a most effectual redemption of men from sin. Of all that God can be supposed to

do

do for men, there is nothing more impossible than this, more repugnant to all the true sense of man, more overthrowing of the undertaking of Christ, more contrary to the nature of true Happiness. An opinion of the damned in Hell being annihilated, or recovered to Holiness and Happiness after some Ages of torment, were a high probability compar'd with this. He that can tempt himself to believe this, may believe any thing, and needs no confutation, but his own unreasonableness. Against this I have been thus large, because it secretly lurks in mens Hearts, that God may save them without so much ado about Faith and Repentance; though being afraid to speak a thing so monstrous, they disguise it under the pretence of a faint Repentance at last.

But from what I have said, It is plainly to be inferred, First, That some things which God cannot, will not do, are not the reproach either of his Mercy or Power; but the Glory and Greatness of both. And this; that He neither can, or will save men without sincere Faith and Repentance (that is without a recovery to Holiness) is one of these things. The *Death-bed Repentance* then, that is *unto Salvation*, must without all dispute be a sincere change from sin to Holiness.

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acquiesce in
the exposition
of the
learned
Dr. Ham-
mond in
his Annotations
concerning
these two
Cases.

2. There is an impossibility, that arises from the pre-emptory, and absolute, and irrevocable determination of the Will and Counsel of God concerning any thing. In this degree of things I account, a *the unpardonableness of the sin against the divine Spirit. The unrepentableness of total Apostates from Christianity to repentance. The impossibility of repentance after this Life:* Now though these carry not their own evidence of

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being inconsistent with the Divine nature, as the former; yet the declaration of supreme pleasure against them is so effectual, that we must needs look upon them, as impossible. And we may see a great consent, a high congruity between the things themselves, and the determination of God concerning them; which reasons are yet clearer with God. For in the sin against the Holy Ghost there is so mature, so perfect, so concocted a wickedness, so high a contumely against the God-head it self, that it is very irreconcilable with either Repentance, or pardon. The total Apostacy from Christianity, and the evidences of it mentioned *Heb. 6th.* from the very nature of the Case appears irreparable, because there is no other or higher Grace, than that of the Gospel, for the Apostates to remove to, *no more sacrifice for sin*, nor are there any higher Evidences of that Gospel, than those he is supposed to revolt from, and no more perfect Acts of contrariety to the Gospel, than *the crucifying the Son of God afresh and putting him to an open shame, the doing despite to the Spirit of Grace, the treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the Blood of the Covenant an unclean thing, in the paralel place.* *Heb. 10.*

Besides all other reasons the unchangeable state of Eternity is so consolidate with, so fixed into our very Being, that the perpetuity of it is very accountable to our Reason.

From hence then, we derive thus much farther against a *Death-bed Repentance*: First that some things, wherein we cannot find an express impossibility in their nature, are yet made so by Gods absolute resolution concerning them; into the reason of which he also is pleased to give us some light: And that many ex-
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pressions of Scripture (as, *They shall seek me early but shall not find me*, the Parable of the foolish Virgins, with many others) make this Repentance very dangerous, with which also the very reason of the Case concurs; Yet not amounting to this kind of impossibility.

3. There are some things impossible according to the Rules, and general Laws of the Creation, and Government of the World, which we call Nature, and which Rules, infinite wisdom and power hath so prescribed to it self, that he hath yet reserved to himself freedom to shew himself above them, as Founder and Lord of Nature.

Thus it is impossible for the Sun to stand still, to raise the Dead, that the Fire should not burn: That is, It is impossible at all times, but when infinite Power is pleased to be seen riding in the Heavens, far above all Nature, that is, when he is pleased to work Miracles: suitable to these Laws of the first Creation, there are also Laws of the new and second Creation, The Redemption of Christ.

It is true, the new Creation, compared with the old, is so far as it is new, *All Miracle*. Such is *Righteousness without works*; Regeneration, such is the Incarnation; the Resurrection. Even as the first Creation and daily Preservation are Miracles compared with *that nothing*, out of which all things were drawn, and are still upheld.

Yet this very miraculous Frame of the Gospel is bounded with certain Laws and Rules, and when these are transcended, it is a Miracle in this miraculous state of things.

Now all Instances of miraculous power are rare and

and extraordinary, and the reasons of them, vvhhen they have been, have alvvays been great and solemn; and vvhhen they have been more plentiful in any Age, the Reasons have been great for that also. And in Miracle it self, there hath been alvvays regard to the natural state of things. Miracle hath for the most part lifted up Nature only, vvherein it vvvas either decayed, or not planted so high, as the very effect to be vvrought, and just then designed; not minding the flourish of it self, but the main Intention only: vve read of no other circumstances but those of ordinary mortality, into vvwhich they that vvvere raised from the Dead in Scripture vvvere exalted; only that they vvvere raised to Life.

In the nev v Creation, so much of the old, as vvould serve in it, is generally taken in; and the constitutions, that vvill agree vvith the design of Grace are upheld for the most part; as vvvere easie to manifest. Divine Inspiration did not disanul the natural temper of the Prophets or Apostles; but they are easily observable in their vvritings. Conversion doth not destroy, but sanctifie and renev nature. For vvhat doth all this serve? but to shew, God does as little, as may be, decline from the first Model of things, His Wisdom so deeply contriv'd.

Further, the nev Creation in all things excelling the old; as the vvhole state of it is never antiquated by a higher Revelation, so the Lavvs of it are seldom exceeded by any thing extraordinary; yet I acknowledge, Instances there are of extraordinaries, even here also.

The Apostleship vvvas in a manner vvholly miraculous, yet the calling of the Apostle *Paul* vvvas some-

Acts 1.
21, 22.

thing higher than that; for whereas the Twelve were trained, and educated in the discipline and conversation of Christ; and express care in the surrogation of one into the place of Judas, was had of such a preparation, yet St. Paul was suddenly born into that high Function and Authority, into which they were gradually admitted. But the reason also was very high, That there might be so great a proof of the power of the Gospel, as a Persecutor and Blasphemer preaching that Faith, he had so notoriously persecuted; and on the sudden, that it might be without the suspicion of a confederacy.

Acts 9. 20
21, 22, 31.
Galat. 1.
23, 24.

1 Tim. 1. 11
ὁ πρῶτος καὶ
ἡ ἀρχὴ
τοῦ νόμου.

1 Tim. 1. 15
v. 13.
v. 16.

His very Conversion was a superabundance of *Abundant Grace*: He was not only in a deep humility of expression, but in the thing it self, one of the *chiefest of sinners* sav'd by Christ: His sin had been the unpardonable sin, had not *ignorance* abated it.

But upon that solemn account *he obtained mercy*; That in him Jesus Christ might shew forth, a pattern of all *long suffering*.

This of the dying Malefactor, I esteem of the same kind, and the reason was extraordinary, as I have before observed.

I have now thus fully discoursed this particular, because it brings me to the ultimate Resolution I can make of this Case; that is,

A *Death-Bed Repentance* whenever it is true, is a Grace and Favour vouchsafed to the Soul, in which it is found, above the ordinary and general Grace that gives Repentance. For it is above these four great Rules of the Gospel, wherein also the fundamental nature of things much conspires.

1. That God is jealous of the Glory of his Grace, and

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and gives it by the same rule, he prescribes to us. *To day, while it is called to day, hear his voice.*

2. God attempts his Grace to the state of mans soul, so as not to permit to such a long hardning, and accustomedness in sin, those whom he intends to convert.

3. The Ingenuity and Freedom of the soul necessary to Repentance is not ordinarily possible, amidst the fears and necessity of Death.

4. *Fruits meet for Repentance, and amendment of Life, and the glorifying God upon Earth*, by a holy conversation are universally required. Such a Repentance then must be proportionable to a *Miracle, a miracle in Grace*. Now Miracles are seldom, and not but upon such reasons as exceed the value of those Rules (at least) in that Case, wherein they are overrul'd; reasons of greater eminency than what daily fall out, but it is a daily reason, that men must either repent or perish. Such Repentances therefore are very rare, and doubtless when they are, God gives a lustre to the reasons why they are; In such a measure, that men may say, *Here is the finger of God*, engraving his wisdom upon his work. And with such a freedom as our Saviour expresses. *Luke 4. 25, 26, 27.*

The practical Conclusion then from hence is this, It is as presumptuous a *boast* for a man to think, *He shall repent when he comes to die*, because the mercy and power of God are infinite; as for him upon the same accounts, to leap into Seas, or roll himself in Flames, without fear of danger. Pro. 37. 1.

Nay, It is such a kind of prophane Insolency, as *Gen. 1. 23* some Interpreters give that of *Lamech* to be, *Tough I should slay a man in my anger, or a young man in my sense.* Petrus in locum.

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of an injury; Yet if Cain notwithstanding his murder, was secured by a sevenfold vengeance from God upon him, that should slay him, I shall be secured in mine, by a vengeance seventy sevenfold. Thus men say, if ever any one for all an irreligious life, was preserved from Hell by a Repentance at last, I need not fear, but I shall: Both agree in a bold claim of the sovereign actings of God for their own safety in sin.

4. Below all these impossibilities, As in nature there are great difficulties, that are not usually overcome, and yet in things possible without a Miracle; so there are also in Grace. Our Saviour tells us, *It is easier for a Camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. His prejudices and prepossessions are so many, his temptations & intanglements are so great.* The Prophet saies, *Can a Blackamore change his skin? or a Leopard his spots? then ye that are accustomed to do evil, may learn to do well.* All delayed Repentances are very uneasy; some Divines observing few Conversions after the fortieth year of Life. But of these, though all men ought to apprehend the danger: I should say, (that no man might be insnared) as our Saviour speaks in these Cases, *The things impossible with men, with God are possible.*

Object. 3. *Objection 3.* But according to this state of the Case, What should a Dying man do, that hath not yet repented? Should he expect a Miracle, or do nothing through despair?

Answer. *Answer.* Have ye not read, what David did when he was an hungred and had need? He adventured over Laws, and was blameless: If any man feel the necessities of a Soul perishing, let him lay hold upon Mercy and Grace to help. There is a Faith in this Case,

Mat. 19.
21, &c.

Jerem. 13:
23.

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Case, like the Faith of Miracles, that removes mountains, and divides Seas. *He that can receive it, let him receive it*: But let every man take heed, how he falls into these necessities; For multitudes not having the right Faith, like the Egyptians, *assay this*, and are drowned. Mat. 19. 12.
Heb. 11. 29.

It is a very hard thing to distinguish between *mirum*, and *miraculum*, a wonder, and a miracle; so is it between a saving Faith, and Repentance that may have wonderful effects, through the conviction of a Death-Bed, and this true saving Faith, this Faith of Miracles; and for any thing I know, Eternity only can make a man safe concerning it, and sure that he had it. Doubtless many like *Joab* perish, catching hold of the horns of the Altar.

Objection 4. But what? If men having made a profession of Religion, have done many things religiously and soberly, and yet through the prevalency of some lusts, it appears they have not truly repented? may not the conversation they have had with Religion, so prepare things, that their Repentance may be dispatched in the instants of Death? Obj. 4.

Answer 1. It is dreadful to consider, how the unhappy pleas of some upon such kind of accounts received by Christ, are also rejected by him. *Many shall say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets? In thy Name have we cast out Devils, and in thy Name done many wonderful Works. Yet he shall profess unto them, I never knew you, Depart from me ye workers of iniquity.* Ans. 1.
Luk. 13.
26, &c.
Mat. 7. 23.

Besides all the Doubts already insisted upon, such men have made a custome of deluding Religion, and have great cause to fear they should do so at last.

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Heb. 3.
9, 10.

God also is so provoked by such, as have long tempted him, proved him, and seen his works, and yet erre from him in their hearts, and do not know his ways, that he comes to his oath against them.

Ans^w. 2.

Answer 2. But lest this should discourage and suffocate all motions after God, either in Life or at Death; and they seem in as good condition, that never mind Religion, as those that do: I add,

Any good thing found in men, either in their Life or Death, though it have not the worthiness of *Repentance to Salvation*, yet shall certainly have its reward in mitigations of punishment; which consideration fully explained at the Day of Judgment will assoyl many of this sort of Doubts concerning the ways of God. I believe those *very early seekings* of God, notwithstanding which, he is said to laugh at the *Destruction* of those, from whom they come, when they have first served the gloryings of Justice, obtain lessening of Pain: as conquered Enemies, after they have been led in Triumph to wait on the Conquerors glory, may have even that service recompensed with a more compassionate captivity.

Ans^w. 3.

Answer 3, If there have been solidity and sincerity in any religious Exercises in the time of Life, whereby the Heart by the Grace of God is prepared for further Grace; as very often Conversion is by degrees: It is hopeful God may use Death, as a season of compleating his work; yet this is to be registred among the seldomer disposes of God, and both those preparations, and the complement of them is under the caution of our Saviour: *Strive to enter in at the strait-gate, for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter, and shall not be able.*

Luk. 11.
24.

Objection 3.

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Objection 5. Is it not at all times a great Folly, to promise ~~to morrow~~ to Repentance? how long soever we may live after that to morrow: because we daily *harden through the deceitfulness of sin.* Is it not also always a curious point, and that requires a great jealousy over it? Whether our Hearts are at any time sincere in returns to God? Is it not lastly, always to be fear'd, lest our *to day*, the time of Grace slip from us? Why then are the dangers placed so industriously upon this Repentance at Death?

Answer 1. First as concerning the time of Repentance, It is to be acknowledged; Every man, that is come to the strength and fixedness of his understanding, to the poize and inclination of his Will and Affections, to the habit and custome of his Life and Actions, and hath not determined for God; hath great reason to fear, lest as there is a deep print of the high hand of Nature upon his unconverted state, so there should be a seal of Justice also, and this Doubt increases every day. *Ans. 2.*

Notwithstanding this; All doubts and scruples, that have an appearance of insnaring and intangling the minds of men with fears, they begin too late, are to be avoided; if it be not so late, that it is *just now dark, and their feet stumbling upon the dark mountains;* *cr. 11. 16.* And these things being written especially for the *living,* who have in ordinary probability time to lose, *Isa. 58. 9* the danger is best placed here, where it takes them every way.

By the way of Encouragement; that the time is not yet past, while they have the spaces of Life, and of the patience of God; which is not a *slackness of Justice, but a designed Salvation.* By the way of Cau-

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tion, because they know not, how soon they may be cast upon a Death-Bed, and this patience be at an end: With Dying men the case is otherwise, who are already in the thickest of the Danger, and must work themselves out in that moment, or perish for ever; without any injury therefore to them, *the living* are thus to be warned.

Iſa 38. 19.

Further, It is evident, all delays of Repentance roll down hither, however men propose a stop; yet hither the generality come at last: so that in effect, It is all one, whether men are dissuaded from trusting to a Dying Repentance, or from delaying their Repentance. For if they are given to delay: It comes to this, They repent and dye together. But if a man be afraid to venture Eternity upon his last Breath, he will repent presently.

2. For the difficulty of being sincere in Repentance, I place it here, because, though every man should by drawing the parallel lines of Delusion, and mistake upon himself, try his Repentance when ever it is; yet these errors fall in greatest numbers upon that point of extremity, and with least possibility of rectifying them: But seeing there are at all times such deceits in this Case, there is nothing so necessary, as to repent in a clear light, and full leisure.

3. For the severity of God in denying his Grace, though I acknowledg his indignation condemns many, who have dallied with him and their own Souls; to be suck'd in again by the whirl-pool of their lusts, when they would have risen out of them; yet this indignation is never so certainly at the height, as when men have provoked it as long as they could: It is most miserable therefore to make

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our last motions within the command of such a horrible pit, lest they prove only the struggles of sinking men: yet this we must do, if we are not before got out of it. There is much greater hope (how bad soever their condition may be) to them, who are yet in the hand of *patience lifting and leading them* Rom. 2. 4
2 Pet. 1. 9 to Repentance; and do not despise it, but account it Salvation.

Objection 6. This Doctrine does not savour enough of the Grace of the Gospel, that would have all men come to Repentance. *Obj. 6.*

Answer. To discourse the severities of the Gospel, to the ends of the Gospel, is most Evangelical Discourse. For as the Gospel doth with all clearness declare its own rigors, that men might not mistake it, for a loose and careless Doctrine, and so miss the Salvation of it; so have I discovered the great hazard of a Dying Repentance, that Living men might be perswaded not to cast themselves upon it, and Dying men excited to an action suitable to the extremity of their Case. *Answer.*

And this is indeed preaching the Gospel: and to be moved upon it with fear, to prepare an Ark to the saving our Souls before the flood come, is as true an effect of Faith, as to be constrained by love to live to him, that hath died for us. I say as true, and gives us a Title to the inheritance of the Righteousness, which is by Faith, together with the other. For the prudence of Faith makes us apprehensive of the reasons of danger, and so to fear, even as the gratitude of it ties us with the obligations of love. This is not that fear that love casts out, but that it self quickens, and is also both quickned and guarded by it: nor is it 1 Joh. 1. 7
2 Cor. 5. 14
1 Joh. 1. 8

Rom. 8.

15.

the bondage, but the wisdom of Fear.

Job 18.

28.

Objection 7. But is the general judgment of Divines thus?*Obj. 7.*

Answer. All judicious Divines are very tender of binding the Prerogative of Grace, or clipping off the action of men towards God, even at this time : in observation whereof I have desired to be cautious herein also : But in their cautions against presumption, their expressions amount to the utmost I have spoken.

See besides
the concur-
ring judge-
ment of the
Ancients,
Bishop
Andrews
Sermons of
RepentanceDr. Ham-
mond and
D. Taylorin their
Treatises of
this point,

Bolton,

Dyke,

&c.

Psalm

119. 165.

Psalm

119. 60.

But setting aside the whole danger of a *Death-bed Repentance*, Let me now lastly thus reason, and thus expostulate; Why should we desire to repent so late? it is good to be betimes doing, that, which is most comporting with our truest happiness; Reconciliation with God. Return to Him, his Favour, to obey Him, these are the truest freedom and peace of a man at alltimes : *Great peace have they which love thy Law, and nothing shall offend them.* He lives in the least pain, that lives holiest; *I made haste therefore and delayed not to keep thy Commandment;* I seized upon so great an enjoyment. as soon as I could, afraid to be kept off from it too long.

To fear God and keep his Commandments is the whole

of man, When a man considers Life, and that he hath but a moment of it, and that therefore he would live that moment, as much as may be, he shall find the highest of life, the top of life to be *Godliness,* which hath all the promises of this life, and of that which is to come.

To pursue this World, and the vanities of it is not only with greatest folly, and impertinency to launch our selves in a great vessel, the greatness of our

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our affection, and with solemn preparations, our strongest Action into the low water, the shallow of Life; which because it cannot carry so great a bulk, increases the toyl and vexation, as well as enhances the vanity and folly: But worse than this, It is the loading our selves with guilt under a delusion of pleasure, that gives us secret disquiet and torment, while we are laying it on; and cannot be laid down as we please; but with more sensible and industrious anguish, then we heap'd it upon us, I mean, the sense of our misdoings, and contrition for them, so necessary to *work Repentance.*

To conclude, *Seeing to dye is the end of all men,* Eccl 7. 2. Repentance is to be chosen while we live, that we may dye with the greatest quier, without those agonies of Conscience, those cold sweats, those sinking eyes, and fainting spirits; for he dies with most ease, that most surveyes Death, and looks into all the retirements of it beforehand; that knows it perfectly, and all its strength: such an one governs himself in it, as in a most important Action with Decency and Freedom. He is not hal'd by Death, but received by it: *Into thy hands I commend my spirit,* he lays himself orderly into the shade of Death: Whereas so long adherence to the pleasures of sin gives Death a violence. It makes men both unwilling, and afraid to dye. *This night thy soul shall be required.* Life is exacted of a Sensualist, and torn from him, that is resign'd by a Spiritual and Mortified man; Good men dye in an active sense, they know how to dye, others dye passively, they are forced to dye.

This great difference prefers to us dying dayly, before that forcible dying at once.

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The wisdom of dying was accounted by Heathens one of the worthy businesses and employments of Life, and that required much study. Christianity gives us the true Rules of it, and they lye in *waiting till our change come; Time is short, they therefore that use this World, should not use it down to the Brin, sensually; but only take the advantages of it to a higher Life: Else being met on the sudden by Death, they are like those that fall off from Life with violence, that is, Headlong; but they that live in the sense of God, and an eternal Condition, alight with care and ease.*

1 Cor. 7.
19.

It is therefore not only greatest Safety, but truest Frugality and Improvement of Life to Repent sometimes, and when we come to dye, the easiest and sweetest way of dying. Not indeed a dying, but a translation into Immortality, and Blessedness.

FINIS.